

Higher Education Review of Henley College Coventry

March 2014

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Henley College Coventry. The review took place from 10 to 12 March 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Matthew Kitching (student reviewer)
- Ms Jacqueline Mack
- Mr Paul Taylor.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Henley College Coventry and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These Expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)¹ setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards
 - the quality of student learning opportunities
 - the information provided about higher education provision
 - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page two. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page six.

In reviewing Henley College Coventry the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2013-14 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.³ A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)⁴ and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode.

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/higher-education-review-themes.aspx.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus.

⁴ Higher Education Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/higher-education-review.

Amended judgement June 2016

Introduction

In March 2014, Henley College Coventry underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in 'meets UK expectations' judgements for the maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisations and the quality of student learning opportunities. It also received judgements of 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations' for the quality of the information produced about its provision and for the enhancement of learning opportunities.

Negative judgements are subject to a formal follow-up by QAA, which involves the monitoring of an action plan produced by the College in response to the report findings. The follow-up visit took place on 18 May 2015 with two reviewers and the recommendation was to revise the original judgement for information about higher education provision at the College from 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations' to 'meets UK expectations', but to retain the original judgement for the enhancement of learning opportunities as 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations'. This recommendation was approved by the QAA Board in July 2015. When negative judgements are not amended after the follow-up process, providers are subject to the application of the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) Unsatisfactory Quality Policy (UQP).

The College produced its initial action plan in July 2014 and continued to develop this, describing how it intended to address the recommendations, affirmations and good practice identified at the original review, and has been working over the last 20 months to demonstrate how it has implemented and further developed that plan.

The UQP process included an initial visit and three progress updates and culminated in a desk-based analysis by two reviewers of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence. The desk-based analysis confirmed that the recommendation relating to the enhancement of student learning opportunities had been successfully addressed.

HEFCE and QAA Board decision and amended judgement

The review team concluded that the College had made sufficient progress to recommend that the judgement be amended. The HEFCE and QAA Board accepted the team's recommendation and the judgement is now formally amended. The College's judgements are now as follows.

- The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information produced about its provision **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

The review can be considered to be signed off as complete.

Findings from the first follow-up process

The team found that the College had made progress against the recommendations and affirmation as follows.

Recommendation – Expectation C

The team found clear evidence that the Higher Education Strategy Group is monitoring higher education information produced by the College, for instance in relation to the timely and accurate production of student handbooks and the updating of entry requirements. The team also ascertained that Programme Management Boards are actively discussing information, through a dedicated agenda item.

Recommendation – Expectations A3 and C

Affirmation – Expectations A2, A3, B9, C

The team found that student handbooks adopt a consistent approach and that programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes are included in the same format. Students informed the team that they are aware of the presence of programme learning outcomes in their handbooks and that these are available in hard copy and electronically. Learning outcomes are also introduced during induction, and staff are willing to discuss individual outcomes with students should the need arise.

Recommendation – Expectations B7 and C

The team found that some, but not all, external examiner reports for live courses were available to students through the College's virtual learning environment (VLE). Some reports had not been received at the time of the follow-up visit and one programme had the previous academic year's report available. However, the team was able to confirm that Programme Management Boards are being used as a forum to discuss the role and reports of external examiners. The team concluded that the College is making satisfactory progress against the recommendation in accordance with the action plan.

Recommendation – Expectation B5 and Enhancement

In relation to enhancement and the system for providing students with details of how the College has responded to student feedback, a handout on the Higher Education Learner Voice, including dates of the Higher Education Strategy Group meetings and an overview of the range of formal and informal ways to capture student feedback, is provided at the representative training session. Students met by the team were aware of the range of mechanisms for providing feedback and gave examples, including emails, links on the VLE, talking to tutors, and raising issues directly with the class representative. Students reported that they were informed of key developments in the College and on their programmes. For example, in Games Design, students had raised issues about guest lectures and trips and while some of the issues raised could not be fully addressed, the reasons for this were explained to students. Students had also raised issues about the wireless network and had been kept informed of progress. Students are also kept up to date through the College VLE, which provides access to Programme Monitoring Board meeting minutes and the higher education action plan.

Recommendation – Enhancement

At the time of the follow-up visit in May 2015, progress had been made on embedding enhancement more explicitly in reporting structures and processes. There is now student representation on the Higher Education Strategy Group. However, there was a lack of documented discussion on enhancement, and any actions taken as a result, in the Group's meeting minutes. The College places key responsibility for monitoring and driving enhancement activity with this group. Therefore, there is a lack of documented evidence relating to the discussion of enhancement and evidence to show that the College is taking a strategic and systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities at institutional level through the Group's meetings.

Findings from the UQP process

The team found that the College had made progress against the recommendation as follows.

Recommendation – Enhancement

The College has provided evidence which demonstrates that its revised approach to enhancement, as articulated through the Higher Education Strategy and Higher Education Learner Enhancement Process is being put into operation effectively. Student feedback generated at programme level is being used for enhancement purposes with the Higher Education Operational and Strategy Groups playing a key role in considering and acting upon this feedback, although the team noted the loss of student representation on the Strategy Group. Outcomes are communicated to students through a range of mechanisms. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress against the action plan.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Henley College Coventry

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Henley College Coventry.

- The maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information produced about its provision **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice** at Henley College Coventry.

- The College's arrangements for supporting and fostering high standards in teaching and learning and the positive impact this has on the student learning experience (Expectation B3).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following recommendations to Henley College Coventry.

By July 2014:

- ensure that information about higher education provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and includes the awarding body and status of approval for each programme (Expectation C).

By September 2014:

- routinely make external examiner reports available to students (Expectations B7, C)
- make programme learning outcomes accessible to students (Expectations A3, C)
- ensure effective oversight of higher education programmes and responsibilities under awarding body agreements (Expectation A4)
- develop guidelines for the internal College programme design and approval processes which detail the support available to staff (Expectations A4, B1)
- develop more effective mechanisms to ensure students understand the turnaround time for the provision of feedback (Expectation B6).

By January 2015:

- ensure that higher education students are provided with opportunities to be involved in College decision making concerning higher education (Expectation B5)
- create an effective system for providing students with details of how the College has responded to student feedback (Expectation B5, Enhancement)
- ensure there is a clearly articulated and systematic College-wide approach to enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Before closing any further programmes, and no later than May 2015:

- formalise the process for maintaining the quality of students' learning opportunities in the event of a programme closure (Expectation B8).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Henley College Coventry is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The actions being taken to standardise student handbooks through the use of a template (Expectations A2, A3, B9, C).

Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The College has a Strategic Framework which includes core values such as 'putting the learners at the heart of what we do'. There are numerous mechanisms for students to provide feedback on their experiences and examples of actions taken in response to this. However, these actions are not always communicated to students and there is also room for development in terms of engaging students as 'partners' in quality assurance and enhancement and ensuring that responses to feedback gathered are clearly communicated.

Students are not currently involved in higher-level discussion and decision-making structures within the College and this is an area for development. There are, however, some positive recent initiatives such as the annual Learner Conference event which contains a dedicated higher education strand and a Learner Voice Forum.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review](#).

About Henley College Coventry

Henley College Coventry (the College) is a medium-sized general further education college situated in North-East Coventry. The College's mission statement reflects its desire to enable students to achieve their potential. The College therefore 'believes in the power of education to make a difference to people's lives and to the achievement of their full potential. To achieve this we put the "Student First" in everything we do'.

The College has a key focus on widening participation and recruits learners from some of the most disadvantaged areas in the city. The vast majority of learners are recruited from Coventry, with smaller numbers travelling from Warwickshire and other neighbouring counties.

The College focuses on vocational education and training, offering courses from entry level to levels 3 and 4 in most sector subject areas. Higher education courses are offered in Education, Forensic Science and Criminology, Sport and Exercise Science, Sports Therapy, Uniformed Services, Engineering and Computing.

The Pearson HNC/HND courses in Health and Social Care offered at the time of the last QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) have since been replaced by higher-level courses in Uniformed Services. The course in Forensic Science has been supplemented by a course in Criminology. However, these courses did not recruit in 2013-14, so only the second years of the programmes are currently running.

The College has undertaken a new partnership agreement with De Montfort University, and this has replaced the current relationship with Coventry University for courses in Sport, with the possibility of an HND Business course also being discussed. In September 2014, this partnership will be extended to include Forensic Science and Criminological Social Science. Further curriculum developments with De Montfort University are also planned for the future, including potential courses in Media.

The College has recently opened a new building. This development will enable higher education students to have some dedicated space to study and socialise. The intention is that this new accommodation will develop an ethos of higher education within a further education setting and attract new learners. New equipment such as a large screen near the reception area will also provide opportunities to communicate information to students relating to College developments.

The College Higher Education Strategy documents the aim to provide higher education of the highest quality. The College plans to continue to diversify and develop a higher education curriculum that prepares learners for progression into employment and includes relevant, industry-related skills. The College operates in a highly competitive local environment and has set fees to reflect that and to ensure that opportunities are provided for members of the local community to progress into higher education, widen participation and increase social mobility.

The College aims to develop university partnerships that share its commitment to enhance opportunities for higher education learners and collaborate with more employers. The College currently runs higher education programmes in association with the University of Warwick, Coventry University, De Montfort University, Sheffield Hallam University and Pearson. The relationships with these awarding bodies differ as the College is engaged with a mixture of franchised and validated provision. The programmes with Coventry University are in their final year and new provision with De Montfort University is replacing these.

The College updated its action plan in March 2014 to show the progress made since the IQER in relation to the six features of good practice, three advisable and two desirable actions.

The College has continued to build on staff development opportunities with a particular focus on teaching and learning, using input from the Development Unit. In relation to the advisable action points, examination boards for Pearson programmes are now chaired by individuals who are independent of the programme team and the College confirmed the provision of guidance on placement learning. However, placement learning was not found to be a major feature of the provision during the current review visit.

A course handbook template now exists and this is designed to provide a baseline for higher education teams as they create guidance materials. The systematic implementation of quality assurance procedures and sharing of good practice was identified as a desirable action point and the quality tool kit has contributed to this. Information has also been shared in relation to the induction section of higher education courses.

Explanation of the findings about Henley College Coventry

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

1 Judgement: Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards

Expectation (A1): Each qualification (including those awarded through arrangements with other delivery organisations or support providers) is allocated to the appropriate level in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*.

Quality Code, Chapter A1: The national level

Findings

1.1 The College does not have degree awarding powers, therefore this Expectation relates to the maintenance of threshold academic standards only. The College delivers a range of higher education courses through collaborative arrangements with Pearson and four University partners: Coventry University, De Montfort University, the University of Warwick and Sheffield Hallam University. The Sheffield Hallam course is a BSc but the College is not involved in the academic delivery and acts as a study centre only. Other higher education provision is largely HNC and HND.

1.2 The College states that overall responsibility for standards and quality rests with the Vice Principal Standards and Learning. The College Higher Education Strategy identifies the Higher Education Strategy Group, which meets four times per year, as 'responsible for managing standards and quality assurance of higher education'. However, there was some inconsistency in that the Higher Education Strategy Group terms of reference include responsibility for quality but do not specifically reference responsibility for standards.

1.3 This Expectation was tested through talking to staff, reviewing a range of policies and documentation related to the self-assessment process, scrutinising minutes of meetings of the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Curriculum Leadership Team, and consideration of assignment briefs and external reports.

1.4 Staff members confirmed that ultimate responsibility for quality and standards was with the Vice Principal Standards and Learning and the Curriculum Leadership Team. The Vice Principal Standards and Learning leads the termly Higher Education Progress Review process, where Quality Improvement Plans linked to Annual Self-Assessment Reports are discussed and monitored. The Curriculum Leadership Team meetings take place weekly and are also led by the Vice Principal Standards and Learning. The Curriculum Leadership Team may receive information from the termly Higher Education Progress Reviews, for example in relation to operational matters.

1.5 The initial documentation made available to the team did not make the College's use of the FHEQ clear. However, the College has in place policies on student assessment which set out clearly the volume of assessment with respect to awarding body requirements, and the internal verification process is used to check this in practice. The College Student Handbook for Higher Education references 'strict adherence' to levels 4 and 5 of the FHEQ in respect of HNC and HND.

1.6 While the initial documentation suggested the College had the same responsibilities with all awarding body partners, meetings and updated paperwork during the visit confirmed that different arrangements exist depending on whether programmes are franchised or validated. For franchised provision the curriculum content is written by the awarding body. In relation to validated provision, the College is responsible for writing curriculum content, and staff refer to the guidance from the awarding body in relation to alignment to the

appropriate level of the FHEQ, and can access support from the awarding body. Staff confirmed that in respect of the Sheffield Hallam BSc Applied Computing course, the College provides access to facilities and tutorial support only.

1.7 Programme staff articulated how the different arrangements work in practice with the Higher Education Coordinator playing a key role in communicating between the awarding body and relevant programme managers. Discussions with programme staff showed that they understood the different responsibilities they had within programmes as a result of close liaison with representatives of each awarding body.

1.8 The review team concluded that qualifications are allocated to the appropriate level in the FHEQ, and therefore the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2): All higher education programmes of study take account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: *The subject and qualification level*

Findings

1.9 The College states in its self-evaluation document that the subject and qualification benchmarks do not apply. The College does not offer any provision at level 6, therefore programmes are below the level for subject benchmark statements to be applicable. The College lists one course at level 6, the BSc Applied Computing course; however, the College is not involved in the formal delivery of the course and provides facilities only. There are no references to professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) links within the self-evaluation document.

1.10 This Expectation was tested by talking to staff and reviewing student handbooks, programme specification documents and documentation from approval events.

1.11 In relation to courses validated by De Montfort University, staff members confirmed that they are responsible for writing curriculum content and do refer to subject benchmarks. Alignment with subject benchmarks is confirmed by the awarding body. Course approval documentation for the HND Sports Sciences for Coaching and Performance and HND Sports Therapy confirms that curricula align with the *Subject benchmark statement: Hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism*. In relation to other courses, the curriculum content is produced by the awarding bodies. Where staff members are writing curriculum content, an external subject specialist is identified to work with the member of staff.

1.12 The College has no formal PSRB links to programmes; however, one course handbook includes information on 'Professional Recognition' which states that the course has 'recognition' from several professional bodies. Staff clarified that students were eligible to apply to these bodies for different categories of professional membership on completion of their course. Information provided to students in relation to PSRB relationships should be clear and the review team has recognised the action being taken to standardise handbooks through the affirmation given in relation to Expectation C.

1.13 The review team concluded that this Expectation was met and the level of risk was low given the nature of the College's responsibilities in relation to those of the awarding body.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3): Higher education providers make available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study.

Quality Code, Chapter A3: The programme level

Findings

1.14 The College follows awarding body guidance and requirements in relation to programme design and approval. Programme specifications contain detailed information on programme aims and learning outcomes. Centralised course and Higher Education Student Handbooks were implemented following a recommendation from the last QAA review. Course handbooks and programme specifications are the mechanisms for communicating 'aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements' to students. The self-evaluation document states that learning outcomes are included in student course handbooks and these are checked and approved by the relevant awarding bodies.

1.15 This Expectation was tested by talking to staff, students and student representatives and by reviewing student handbooks, programme specifications and induction materials.

1.16 The team heard from staff that a new look for handbooks was introduced by the College last year and there was a staff training day to support this. Responsibility for producing handbooks is devolved to programme teams but they must complete these documents on a centrally produced template before heads of department sign them off. Further to this there is central oversight of all handbooks by the Higher Education Coordinator. There is a minimum content requirement based on a series of standard headings and information in relation to appeals and assessment.

1.17 While students appear to be satisfied with the information they receive about learning outcomes and achievement, there are some indications in the student written submission that they would value some further explanation of the handbooks. Students met by the team had mixed views and experiences in relation to the provision of handbooks. Students on Public Services and Forensic Science told the review team they did not have a handbook. Students on the HNC/D Computing course had been advised they could access the handbook on the virtual learning environment (VLE) but in practice had not done so. Other students had been provided with handbooks and found them clear and helpful. The review team found that overall, while some students reported not having access to a current course handbook, all programme areas did in fact provide this information either electronically via the VLE or in hard copy.

1.18 Programme specifications exist for all programmes but in practice were accessed in different ways and not all were directly available to students. Programme specifications for De Montfort University courses were held on the College I:Drive which is a staff drive not accessible to students. Coventry University programme specifications were accessed via a link to the Coventry University website on the College VLE. In the case of the University of Warwick and Pearson courses, the programme learning outcomes were available on the awarding body websites. The review team could not identify any explicit references to programme learning outcomes or programme specifications from the sample induction materials and guidance to staff, although handbooks were explained to students as part of induction.

1.19 A range of course handbooks were scrutinised. Some handbooks included course 'Aims' while others did not. Similarly, in relation to the development of 'Skills', this was not provided in all course handbooks and, where available, was not in a consistent format.

Overall, the team found that information provided to students through course handbooks was not consistent or clear in relation to programme aims and intended learning outcomes. Although the team were able to affirm the action being taken in relation to Expectation C to standardise handbooks, it **recommends** that the College make programme learning outcomes accessible to students.

1.20 On the basis of the inconsistencies identified in the information provided to students relating to programme aims and the intended learning outcomes, the team found that overall this Expectation was not met. While the programme learning outcomes are set out in programme specifications, these are not consistently made available to all students and therefore the level of risk posed is moderate.

Expectation: Not met

Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (A4): Higher education providers have in place effective processes to approve and periodically review the validity and relevance of programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter A4: Approval and review

Findings

1.21 The College complies with the approval and review requirements for each of the awarding bodies responsible for higher education programmes. In addition, the College has an Internal Validation Policy and uses this to consider proposals for new programmes. As well as having an Internal Validation Policy, curriculum initiatives are discussed by the Higher Education Strategy Group. The group discusses curriculum proposals to ensure they are in line with the College's higher education strategy and external local and national priorities. The College uses mechanisms for reviewing programmes that include Progress Reviews chaired by the Vice Principal Standards and Learning and an annual self-assessment process for each subject area.

1.22 The Expectation was tested by reviewing the documentation provided on responsibilities with each awarding body and internal validation processes and in discussions with senior staff, programme managers and programme teaching staff.

1.23 Information relating to responsibilities for the oversight of quality and standards in the College is provided within the section for Expectation A1 in this report. The review team sought further clarification on the overall responsibility for quality and standards and staff explained that both the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Curriculum Leadership Team have responsibilities and that there was some overlap. However, like the Higher Education Strategy Group, the Curriculum Leadership Team has responsibility for quality in its terms of reference but a responsibility for standards is not specified. The review team had difficulty identifying evidence of discussion on specific items related to oversight or review of standards from the minutes of the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Curriculum Leadership Team.

1.24 The Senior Management Team also has responsibility for aspects of higher education provision and meets weekly. It was clear from discussions with the Vice Principal Standards and Learning that after College internal validation is granted by the Senior Management Team, the College relies on the awarding body's processes for programme approval. The focus of the Internal Validation Record is on presenting a business case for the proposed programme and an outline of the curriculum content. Programme teaching staff also confirmed that once internal validation was granted for a curriculum proposal, they then worked on developing the detail of the programme ready for submission to the awarding body. The College makes use of an external critical friend to assist teams to develop their detailed programme proposals for the awarding body. There was therefore no internal College process apparent for guiding these curriculum developments and having oversight before submission to the awarding body for approval, and this therefore links to the recommendation relating to Expectation B1, paragraph 2.4.

1.25 Self-assessments are completed by programme managers, drawing on a range of sources, and are moderated by senior managers. Self-assessments identify actions based on reviewing the centrally provided programme data. The Progress Reviews are used as a way of monitoring the annual self-assessment process and progress against actions. A key central role is that of the Vice Principal Standards and Learning who meets regularly with heads of department and programme managers to discuss their Progress Reviews. Meetings with staff showed that there is a clear understanding of the Progress Review system and how this is used to pull together actions for each programme area.

1.26 There are a number of formal mechanisms through which the College has oversight of quality and standards, including the Progress Review Process. However, there was no clear evidence of which group or team had overall responsibility for oversight of the validity and relevance of programmes based on these review processes in terms of reference to or records of meetings. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure effective oversight of higher education programmes and responsibilities under awarding body agreements.

1.27 Overall, the review team considered this Expectation to be met and the level of risk low because the approval of programmes is dealt with by the relevant awarding body.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A5): Higher education providers ensure independent and external participation in the management of threshold academic standards.

Quality Code, Chapter A5: Externality

Findings

1.28 External participation is achieved through two main methods - employer involvement and external examining. The College places a strong emphasis on employability and therefore involves employers at a number of points. External examiners are appointed by awarding bodies and their reports are received by the College Principal.

1.29 The review team tested this Expectation in discussion with senior staff and programme teams and by reviewing documentation related to the Internal Validation Record and external examiners' reports. The majority of points relating to external examiner input to programmes are covered under Expectation B7.

1.30 Senior staff confirmed that the College places a strong focus on employability and therefore employer links are important within programmes. This importance is established at an early stage because the College's Internal Validation Record asks programme teams to identify any employer involvement in the programme proposal. Programme staff use a number of different mechanisms to gain employer input to curriculum content. These include employer forums, asking employers what they would want from students on the programme, and guest speakers in class. The College also makes use of an external critical friend when developing programmes for awarding body approval. Students also experience employer input more directly where there is work experience (sports therapy) and work-based learning (teacher education).

1.31 As well as its internal processes for handling external examiner reports, the College also follows the awarding body processes for external participation. For example, the external examiner reports and responses are a feature of the Programme Management Boards held by De Montfort University. Examples of external examiner reports provided from Pearson and Coventry University were generally positive about the College's higher education provision.

1.32 Overall, the review team considered this Expectation to be met because of the participation of employers in the process and the external examining that is dealt with by the relevant awarding body. The level of risk was considered to be low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A6): Higher education providers ensure the assessment of students is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Quality Code, Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes

Findings

1.33 The majority of assessment approval is dealt with as part of the awarding body approval processes. However, the College also has an internal verification process to ensure assessment is robust. Details of the processes for internal verification are outlined in the College's Internal Quality Assurance Policy and Guidelines. Information about the assessment standards expected across the College is given in the Assessment of Students Work Policy. The students use the Henley Hub to access assignment briefs and find these helpful in guiding them.

1.34 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing documentation related to the College's policies on assessment processes, a sample of assignment briefs and internal verification processes. Design and management of assessment were also explored in meetings with senior staff, programme teams and students.

1.35 The College makes use of assignment briefs to ensure assessment is valid and reliable. Examples of assignment briefs showed that detailed guidance is provided to students about the nature of the assessment task, relevant learning outcomes and guidance on the content required to achieve the necessary assessment standard. Meetings with students confirmed that they either receive, or have access to (via the VLE), the assignment briefs near the start of each module. Students said that tutors often explain the detail within the assignment brief and are available to clarify any assessment queries.

1.36 Documentation on internal verification processes showed that both the assignment brief and a sample of assessments are checked for their robustness. The College's Assessment of Student Work Policy applies to Pearson provision only as the relevant University assessment policies are used for other programmes. Staff confirmed that the College also uses a process of double marking/internal verification to ensure marking practices are robust. A sample of assessments may also be moderated by the awarding body. Discussions with programme staff confirmed that assignment briefs are subject to internal verification before being issued to students and that some support is available to newer staff when designing assignments. Staff are allocated a mentor/advanced practitioner from within the College to assist them with assignment briefs. Some staff also make use of the external verifier/external examiner when designing their assignment briefs. These practices varied depending on the awarding body; for example, for programmes with the University of Warwick, the University writes the assignment briefs.

1.37 Overall, the review team considered this Expectation to be met because the approval of assessments is the responsibility of the relevant awarding body and the College makes use of its own internal verification processes and assignment briefs to ensure assessment practices are rigorous. The level of risk was considered to be low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.38 In reaching its 'meets UK expectations' judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The team identified two recommendations in this area and a further recommendation under Expectation B1 which also contributes to the judgement. There is also a link to an affirmation attached to Expectation C (information about higher education provision).

1.39 The College has different responsibilities with its four University partners and Pearson. In its validated provision, the College is responsible for developing curriculum content. However, information from the awarding bodies is used in the franchised programmes. The College does have systems for monitoring the maintenance of standards, although in areas such as programme approval the processes are not always formally documented or fully developed.

1.40 Students are given a range of information relating to their programmes and assessment, although some content such as overall programme outcomes is not consistently provided. However, the College does clearly communicate module learning outcomes and makes use of awarding body websites. Overall, the processes of the awarding body are used but to differing degrees depending on the type of partnership.

1.41 Although one Expectation was not met in this area, it was considered to be a moderate rather than a serious risk because of the presence of awarding body processes. Therefore, the review team concluded that the College **meets** UK expectations in relation to the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation.

2 Judgement: Quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers have effective processes for the design and approval of programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme design and approval

Findings

2.1 Awarding bodies are responsible for programme approval and the College complies with their individual requirements for each of its higher education programmes. New programme proposals are considered following the College's Internal Validation Policy. To ensure curriculum initiatives are in line with the College's higher education strategy and local and national priorities, they are discussed by the Higher Education Strategy Group.

2.2 The Expectation was tested by reviewing the documentation related to internal validation processes and in discussions with senior staff, programme managers and programme teaching staff.

2.3 The business case and curriculum outline for proposed programmes are considered by the Senior Management Team who grant approval for programme development to go ahead. Following this approval, programme teams work on developing the detailed programme specification required by the awarding body. However, the College does not have in place a process to oversee these developments prior to submission to the awarding body.

2.4 As a result of a lack of an internal process, there was no opportunity for students to be involved in curriculum design and approval within the College, no evaluation of process evident and no explicit support for design, development and approval of programmes. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College develop guidelines for the internal College programme design and approval processes which detail the support available to staff. This recommendation also links to Expectation A4.

2.5 Overall, the review team considered this Expectation to be met and the level of risk low owing to awarding bodies having ultimate responsibility for the design and approval of programmes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Policies and procedures used to admit students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied.

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Admissions

Findings

2.6 The College has its own Admissions Policy which is supplemented by policies belonging to each of its respective awarding bodies. College staff are responsible for conducting interviews and an interview checklist is in place to support the process. Ultimate responsibility for the admission of students rests with the College's awarding bodies.

2.7 The review team tested this Expectation by examining the College Admissions Policy, meeting with students and staff and viewing relevant web pages on both the College and awarding body websites.

2.8 The College has a clear Admissions Policy and admissions criteria are set and available for prospective students on the website. The review team heard that students were increasingly applying through UCAS rather than directly to the College. Programme staff are responsible for conducting interviews and staff training is provided accordingly. Students were satisfied with the admissions process and informed the team that they had received the information they required. The team did find that information contained on the website did not always make the relationship with the awarding body clear. There is no separate complaints procedure should an applicant wish to make a complaint and in these instances the standard College Complaints and Suggestions Procedure would be used.

2.9 The review team found that while the relationship with the awarding body was not always explicit on the website, students were able to access the information they required, including admissions criteria. Admissions arrangements outlined within policies were being executed appropriately. These considerations, added to the fact that the awarding bodies play a part in the oversight of admissions, led the team to conclude that the Expectation was met and the associated risk low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth, and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*

Findings

2.10 The College has a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy which is underpinned by a series of quality assurance measures, including Progress Reviews, a varied range of annual programme monitoring systems allied to the College's different awarding bodies and a Teaching Quality Improvement Scheme. These enable the College to articulate its expectations relating to teaching and learning and monitor their implementation. The arrangements are supplemented by the Development Unit which provides support for teaching staff on an individual and group basis.

2.11 The review team tested this Expectation by reading the College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, viewing support materials produced by the Development Unit, meeting staff and students and examining a range of documents relating to the Teaching Quality Improvement Scheme.

2.12 College arrangements for supporting teaching and learning are well developed and effective in ensuring staff are equipped to undertake their roles. The College has a Strategic Framework which includes a Higher Education Strategy and this is supported by the Teaching Learning and Assessment Improvement Policy and a Training and Staff Development Policy, and informs the approach to teaching and learning. Students consider the teaching they receive to be highly engaging and explicitly linked to their chosen career paths.

2.13 The Teaching Learning and Assessment Improvement process for observation is detailed and thorough. Completed observations are discussed with staff through appraisal and also inform the Self-Assessment Review, and are subsequently monitored in the Progress Review Process overseen by the Vice Principal Standards and Learning. A detailed overview report is produced on observation which effectively draws together themes, issues and good practice arising from observations, though the College could draw out items related to higher education more effectively.

2.14 The Development Unit is central to supporting teaching and learning across the College. The Development Unit produces a series of mini guides and briefing cards containing helpful information for teaching staff. The Development Unit also organises staff development events, the College process of supported experiments, and provides advice and support for staff on a one-to-one basis. The College uses a system of supported experiments where staff from distinct subject areas meet several times a year to observe each other's classes and then share feedback on techniques and delivery styles at a series of events including a teaching and learning fair.

2.15 Advanced Practitioners facilitate cross-College training sessions, designed to address College priorities, throughout the year. They also have substantial caseloads of staff to mentor across both higher and further education and support new teaching staff to adjust to their roles. New and existing teaching staff both reported that induction, support and ongoing training are readily accessible. Staff provided examples of the College funding travel to conferences and fee support for higher degrees. Overall, the review team felt that the

College's arrangements for supporting and fostering high standards in teaching and learning and the positive impact this has on the student learning experience is **good practice**.

2.16 With regards to the learning environment, students commented that action had been taken in response to an insufficient amount of accessible IT on campus. A new part of the College estate has recently been opened, part of which is dedicated to higher education students and was again a response to feedback from students.

2.17 The review team came to the conclusion that the College has adopted a clear strategy for teaching and learning and that the wide ranging and effective mechanisms for monitoring this and supporting staff mean that this Expectation was clearly met. The robust nature of the College observation process in particular means that the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement

Findings

2.18 Allocation and management of the College's resource base does not emanate from a formal policy. Validation provides the foundation for ensuring appropriate resources are in place for each programme, and resources are reviewed on an ongoing basis through standard College processes such as the annual budget cycle, course monitoring and staff appraisal.

2.19 The review team tested this Expectation by meeting with the Principal, College staff and students. It was also reviewed by examining partner approval documentation and collaborative reviews undertaken by the College's awarding bodies.

2.20 The process for resource allocation is clear, understood and effective. Resources are initially approved as part of the College programme approval process prior to validation by the awarding body. Should further resources be required, they are requested either through the annual capital bids round, or for non capital resources, through the standard budget cycle. Resource needs are identified through the annual appraisal system and other College monitoring systems such as Progress Reviews.

2.21 Students confirmed that appropriate resources are largely in place but would value additional core texts and increased access to periodicals. Students were clear that they could access resources belonging to the awarding bodies, including online resources, but few students elect to take up this opportunity. The recent investment in additional IT has increased accessibility and students informed the team that this had a positive impact on their overall experience.

2.22 A personal tutoring system is in place and all students have timetabled tutorials. Students find these useful and central service staff are invited to attend to impart important information in the sessions and provide any necessary support. The process is underpinned by Student Information Sheets and Learner Profiles which enable the College to record the support needs of students.

2.23 Students were complimentary about the resources available through the College VLE. Programme teams have autonomy to develop their own approach to using the platform, as the College does not impose a minimum use policy, although it is planning to introduce this from 2015. New staff members are afforded an induction on the platform and the Information Learning Technology Manager holds weekly drop-in sessions. Following the IQER the College has been conducting an annual audit of their VLE which enables them to ensure suitable resources are available for students.

2.24 The review team came to the conclusion that this Expectation was met on the basis that a clear process exists for identifying resource needs and for having these approved by the College's Senior Management Team. The model was well understood by staff and although students reported some minor concerns surrounding the availability of resources, they were largely complimentary about access and sufficiency. The existence of the well-established process also led the team to conclude that the level of risk was low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student engagement

Findings

2.25 The College's approach to student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement is laid out in a Learner Involvement Strategy which is applicable to further and higher education students. Higher education students are not represented on College-level committees but the College seeks to include their views at these meetings using feedback gathered through the mechanisms outlined in the Learner Involvement Strategy.

2.26 This Expectation was tested by talking to staff, students and in particular student representatives. The team also examined the Learner Involvement Strategy, Learner Voice Forum and Student Council minutes and a diagram outlining student involvement in the College meeting structure.

2.27 The Student Council is viewed by the College as the main vehicle for generating student feedback and currently has 14 representatives from higher education programmes. Students reported that the agenda is often dominated by issues relating to further education and consequently attendance amongst the higher education representatives is inconsistent.

2.28 The College employs a range of surveys and questionnaires including the Higher Education Survey and Higher Education Module Questionnaire. Students informed the team that they are often asked to complete feedback for their course and respond accordingly. Once feedback has been submitted, however, they are not aware of receiving information about what the College has done. The team are aware that the College uses a 'You Said, We Did' mechanism but this was not identified by higher education students met during the visit. The team therefore **recommends** the College create an effective system for providing students with details of how it has responded to student feedback. This recommendation also links to the findings in paragraph 4.7.

2.29 Students are satisfied that the Learner Representative System is working at programme level. They are aware of who their representatives are and that the representatives are meeting with teaching staff. Higher education students are not represented on the major College committees, however, including the Curriculum Leadership Team, Senior Management Team and Governing Body, except through a further education representative in the latter. This lack of student representation on key College committees limits the opportunities for students to be active partners in the assurance of the educational experience and to contribute to making decisions with College staff over areas in need of improvement. This also removes a potential mechanism for communicating outcomes to students following learner voice feedback. The team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure that higher education students are provided with opportunities to be involved in College decision making concerning higher education.

2.30 The team found that this Expectation was not met as although a constructive dialogue exists between students and staff at programme level, there is a lack of opportunity for students to participate in College-level committees. Students were unable to confirm that actions taken in response to their feedback had been communicated to them. The team came to the conclusion that the risk attached to this Expectation was moderate because students were not operating as partners in the assurance and enhancement of learning opportunities at provider level.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit.

Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning

Findings

2.31 Assessment approval is largely dealt with by the awarding body approval processes. Assessments are internally verified following the College's process detailed in the Internal Quality Assurance Policy and Guidelines. For Pearson programmes the College follows its Assessment of Students Work Policy and for University programmes the College follows each University's assessment policy. Assignment briefs are accessed by students using the VLE and tutors help interpret the briefs in class.

2.32 This Expectation was tested by reviewing documentation related to the College's policies on assessment processes, a sample of assessment briefs and internal verification processes. Appropriateness of assessment practice was also explored in meetings with senior staff, programme teams and students.

2.33 Assignment briefs and internal verification processes are discussed under Expectation A6. Assignment briefs follow different formats depending on the programme they relate to, but all include identification of learning outcomes that need to be met. Students confirmed that they found the details on the assignment briefs helpful in understanding what was needed to achieve high marks.

2.34 The student written submission raised two concerns in relation to assessment processes. First, students appreciated having launch dates and deadlines for assignment submission but 'no group had consistent time periods indicated in which their work would be marked and handed back to them'. Meetings with students confirmed that they are not given a specific deadline or date for when they will receive feedback and there was some uncertainty regarding the turnaround time for this. The College's three-week turnaround time is stated in the College's Assessment of Students' Work Policy and is also made known to students in their course handbooks. Students met during the review visit stated that feedback time varies by programme and tutor and may depend on how busy they are - varying from a few days to weeks. Other students stated that the nature of the assessment (more practical assessments) meant they sometimes had immediate feedback. Students did say that some feedback had taken longer than three weeks but that they had communication from staff to explain the situation. Some students said that their first feedback was not received in time to inform their next assessment and that they waited for their feedback to be available sometime within the three-week period. The review team felt that while information relating to feedback turnaround times is provided in student handbooks, there are issues in terms of students' understanding of this, particularly where there are variations in the type of assignment and draft or formal submissions. Therefore, to help manage students' expectations and let them know whether feedback will be available in time to inform their next assessment, the review team **recommends** that the College develop more effective mechanisms to ensure students understand the turnaround time for the provision of feedback.

2.35 The second issue raised in the student written submission related to the nature of the feedback provided. Students appreciated that generally constructive feedback is given, but there was some variation between tutors with some felt to be overly critical and others extremely constructive. Some variation in feedback was also noted in an external examiner report. This was explored in student meetings and was not raised as a particular concern.

Students confirmed that there may be some variability in feedback type by tutor but that they are able to explore the feedback provided either verbally or via email.

2.36 Overall, the review team considered this Expectation to be met because the College has rigorous processes in place to internally verify assessment processes. In addition, these are overseen by the awarding body and external verifiers/examiners, and therefore the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External examining

Findings

2.37 The majority of processes related to external examining are the responsibility of awarding bodies. External examiners are appointed by awarding bodies and reports are initially received by the College Principal. Actions identified by external examiners feed into the self-assessment reports and are monitored through Progress Reviews and Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs).

2.38 The review team tested this Expectation by reviewing documentation related to external examiners' reports, processes for responding to actions and in discussion with senior staff and programme teams. Student access to external examiner reports was also explored with students and senior staff.

2.39 The Principal receives external examiner reports for the whole College and annotates them before passing them onto the Audit and Standards Unit Manager. Any points requiring actions are identified and logged by the Audit and Standards Unit Manager working with appropriate programme teams. Programme managers demonstrated a shared understanding of this process by confirming that these points then feed into regular Progress Reviews. There was no specific information provided on how common themes, emerging from external examiner reports across higher education provision (either issues or good practice), were collated for central oversight and ownership responsibility.

2.40 Staff also stated that external examiners attend assessment boards and Programme Management Boards. However, evidence of external examiner input to assessment boards was provided in only one example of programme assessment board minutes where external examiners' comments were considered, but it was not possible from the minutes to assess if the external examiners were present at the board. Evidence provided for Programme Management Boards did not show whether the external examiner was in attendance or had sent apologies, and therefore the statement on their involvement at this level could not be confirmed.

2.41 Staff were able to give some examples of how they had responded to external examiner comments through the introduction of online marking, videoing presentations and directing students to higher-level relevant resources. Senior staff stated that external examiners have the opportunity to meet with students and that students see a truncated version of the record of this meeting. Students were not sure whether they had met any external examiners and tended to provide examples relating to contact with other awarding body representatives. There is, however, feedback provided on external examiner report forms to indicate meetings were held with students.

2.42 The students seen during the review visit confirmed that they had not seen any external examiner reports. The Vice Principal Standards and Learning stated that the College had not taken the decision to make external examiner reports available to students so they currently had no access to these. The review team **recommends** that the College routinely make external examiner reports available to students. This also links to the findings in paragraph 3.5.

2.43 Overall, the review team considered this Expectation to be met because the management of external examiner input is dealt with by the relevant awarding body, and the

College has processes in place to disseminate issues raised in external examiner reports.
The level of risk was considered to be low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers have effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review

Findings

2.44 The College complies with the monitoring and periodic review requirements for each of the awarding bodies responsible for higher education programmes. The College has mechanisms in place for internally reviewing programmes that include Progress Reviews chaired by the Vice Principal Standards and Learning and an annual self-assessment process for each subject area.

2.45 The Expectation was tested by reviewing the documentation provided on periodic review processes used and in discussions with senior staff, programme managers and programme teaching staff.

2.46 Self-assessments are completed by programme managers, drawing on a range of sources, and are moderated by senior managers. Self-assessments identify actions based on a review of programme monitoring data provided centrally. These feed into an overall College self-assessment report. The Progress Reviews are used as a way of monitoring the annual programme self-assessment process and monitoring progress against actions through QIPs. A key central role is that of the Vice Principal Standards and Learning who meets regularly with heads of department and programme managers to discuss their Progress Reviews. Meetings with staff showed that there is a clear understanding of the Progress Review system and how this is used to pull together actions for each programme area.

2.47 Staff were confident that the self-assessment process worked effectively because of the way progress against actions was monitored through Progress Reviews, by senior management and through regularly (termly) checking and Programme Management Boards. The Curriculum Leadership Team (CLT) also checks Progress Reviews (across all provision) twice yearly to monitor actions. However, the notes from CLT meetings were unable to confirm that Progress Reviews were checked in any level of detail.

2.48 The processes in place for handling course withdrawal/closure were not clear. The Senior Management Team has responsibility for any course closure decisions and ensuring that the quality of students' learning experience is maintained. There is no policy to document the course closure process and therefore the review team **recommends** that the College formalise the process for maintaining the quality of students' learning opportunities in the event of programme closure.

2.49 Overall, the review team considered this Expectation to be met because the College has in place effective mechanisms for periodically reviewing progress (in addition to those of the awarding bodies) and routinely monitoring progress against self-assessments. The level of risk was considered to be low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals.

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic complaints and student appeals

Findings

2.50 Information and general principles in relation to the College's approach to complaints and academic appeals is set out in the Complaints and Suggestions Policy which applies to higher education and further education learners. This policy cross-references the College Academic Appeals Procedure for complaints about academic matters. The College has an Admissions Policy, which applies to all programmes, and copies of the documents are available from Student Services and Reception. There is also guidance on 'Complaints and Assessment Appeals' in course handbooks. In relation to higher education programmes, the Academic Appeals procedures of the awarding body apply, with the exception of Pearson where the College policy and procedures are used. Complaints are recorded centrally and reviewed termly, and an annual report made to Governors. The Complaints and Suggestions Policy is reviewed annually on the basis of feedback.

2.51 The review team explored the effectiveness of the College procedures for handling complaints by considering the relevant documentation and talking to students and staff.

2.52 The College Admissions Policy applies to all programmes but does not specifically cover admissions complaints or appeals. The guidance on 'Complaints and Assessment Appeals' in course handbooks provides information about key contacts and the required steps to be taken in relation to assessment queries. However, the handbooks do not specifically signpost students to either the Complaints and Suggestions Policy or the Academic Appeals Procedure and there is no reference to procedures associated with the awarding bodies. The Student Handbook for Higher Education 13/14 provides a range of information but does not include details on complaints and appeals.

2.53 The complaints and academic appeals processes are clearly understood by staff. The team found that students were aware of the complaints procedures and how to make a complaint. Students felt that complaints were resolved effectively by the College but some felt this took too long. The Complaints and Suggestions Policy specifies a response time but students were not particularly aware of this. The College does not have a specific policy for admissions appeals but these are dealt with through the Complaints and Suggestions Policy and support for students is available through the College Students' Union.

2.54 The team concluded that there were some inconsistencies and omissions in the guidance on complaints and academic appeals provided to students through course handbooks. Specifically, signposting to the College Policy and Procedure could be clearer and information on the circumstances in which the appeals procedures of the awarding bodies applied could be provided. The College staff acknowledged that there needed to be a more detailed, consistent approach to student handbooks in this regard. Nonetheless, students were clear on the process and procedures to follow and knew how to access them and where to seek advice and guidance. The review team has recognised the action being taken to standardise handbooks through the affirmation given in relation to Expectation C.

2.55 Overall, the review team considered the design and operation of the College complaints and appeals processes effective in their operation and concluded that this Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B10): Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.

Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others*

Findings

2.56 The College does not have degree awarding powers, therefore this Expectation is only applicable to the provider's management of its relationships with other organisations to whom it has delegated responsibilities.

2.57 While there are links with external employers for provision of work-based projects and work experience placements, these are not credit-bearing at present. The review team heard there are future plans to assess students on placement but this is not currently in place. The only exception to this is the University of Warwick programme (mainly delivered to College members of staff) where observation of teaching practice is a major part of the assessment and the process is managed by the awarding body. In this case, students were very positive about their placement experiences.

2.58 The review team therefore concluded that the College met this Expectation and that the level of risk was low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research degrees*

Findings

2.59 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

Quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.60 In reaching its 'meets UK expectations' judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. The team identified one feature of good practice and three recommendations in this area, with three further recommendations being shared with other judgement areas and links to the one affirmation attached to Expectation C (information about higher education provision).

2.61 The College has a particular focus on teaching and learning and this is regarded as the driving force for many initiatives such as supported teaching and learning experiments. Monitoring processes are in place and there is clear guidance given to students in relation to assignment work at programme level. Some use is made of external examiners, although this could be extended by the provision of examiner reports to students.

2.62 The review team concluded that the Expectation relating to student engagement was not met and posed a moderate risk. While there is a commitment to putting students first and numerous learner voice mechanisms exist, there are some issues relating to the consistent provision of feedback on actions taken. Students tend to be asked to provide feedback rather than being engaged with the decision-making process and acting as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience, particularly in terms of contributions to higher-level committees.

2.63 One Expectation was not met in this area and it was considered to pose moderate risk, but the review team concluded that overall the quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: Quality of the information produced about its provision

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about higher education provision

Findings

3.1 The College manages a range of information for both prospective and current students. The intention is for the website to provide relevant details relating to higher education programmes with regular monitoring and updates to ensure that information is current and clear. Course information is also held on the UCAS site and the Key Information Set data is reportedly made available externally. While on their programmes, higher education students are provided with College and course handbooks as well as careers information and guidance through subject-based sessions, tutorials and the Careers Advice Team. Performance data is produced by internal information systems and disseminated to managers and teachers throughout the academic year.

3.2 The provision of information was tested during the review visit by viewing the College website, VLE and relevant documents such as course handbooks. Meetings were also held with staff members with differing roles and responsibilities within the College and with higher education students.

3.3 The College Marketing Manager is responsible for reviewing information, following approval, including details on the website, although the team were not able to ascertain that this is done through a consistently applied, formal process. Instead the Marketing Manager relies on programme managers and heads of department instigating changes and then communicating these to the Marketing Department. The awarding bodies also comment on the suitability of information developed by the College and the team were provided with an example of such feedback provided by the Partnerships Manager at De Montfort to the College.

3.4 Programme managers generate content for student handbooks, which is considered by the Higher Education Coordinator and then approved by the relevant head of department. The involvement of the Marketing Manager in this area is chiefly to standardise the format of handbooks in line with agreed brand guidelines. While the College has taken action to develop a central template, for the production of student handbooks, its application is not yet consistent or on every occasion fit for purpose. For instance, the team found information relating to PSRBs in the HNC Manufacturing Engineering Handbook 2013-14 that could lead students to believe they achieve a greater degree of professional recognition upon completion of the programme than is actually the case. Staff members explained during the review visit that students were eligible to apply to the professional bodies listed in the handbook for different categories of professional membership on completion of their course as discussed under Expectation A2. Overall, the review team recognised the progress being made in this area and the significant liaison with awarding bodies. The team therefore **affirms** the actions being taken to standardise student handbooks through the use of a template.

3.5 As noted under Expectation B7, the College does not currently make external examiner reports available to students. All students whom the team met confirmed they had

not seen an external examiner report. This finding also links to the recommendation outlined in paragraph 2.42.

3.6 The team were unable to find evidence that the College has given sufficient consideration to the Quality Code, *Part C: Information about higher education provision* and consequently there are gaps in the information provided to students. Most handbooks provide information surrounding the aims of the course but do not provide programme learning outcomes. Therefore, as noted in Expectation A3, the team found that information provided to students through course handbooks was not consistent or clear in relation to intended programme learning outcomes. This therefore links to the recommendation in paragraph 1.19.

3.7 The review team also found that misleading and incomplete information about programmes was present on the College website. While the Key Information Set is available through the UCAS website, the information is not embedded onto the College website and this was acknowledged during the review visit. Some programme pages also made no explicit reference to the presence of an awarding body; indeed, some students the team met had initially been uncertain as to who awarded their qualification. The review team found that the College was also promoting a programme that, at the time of the review, had not been validated by an awarding body and that status was not made clear to potential applicants. The College stated that they saw this as appropriate as it supported recruitment for the programme and that they contacted applicants by telephone to inform them of the programme's status, but the team decided that this had the potential to mislead applicants and did not provide them with trustworthy information. The team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure that information about higher education provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and includes the awarding body and status of approval for each programme.

3.8 The team found that this Expectation was not met and the risk was moderate as they were unable to ascertain where overall responsibility lies for ensuring information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Responsibility for the production, approval and monitoring of information is distributed to numerous staff within the institution. This includes programme leaders, heads of department, the Higher Education Coordinator and the College Marketing Manager. While this distribution of responsibility is not in itself problematic, the review team found that as a result of involving multiple staff, not embedding the Expectation of *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code and only possessing limited systematic processes for the monitoring of information, deficiencies existed in the information published by the College.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

Quality of the information produced about its provision: Summary of findings

3.9 In reaching its 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations' judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook and identified one recommendation and one affirmation. Two further recommendations are shared with other judgement areas.

3.10 There is some awareness of the need for processes relating to the production and approval of information about higher education at the College. Details relating to higher education provision are available on the College website and for staff members and students through the internal VLE. Information is also provided through course and higher education handbooks. However, there are examples of omissions and inconsistencies in the content provided, such as the provision of details relating to the awarding bodies and programme learning outcomes. Some information provided has the potential to mislead students in relation to the programmes being offered and the associated accreditation with PSRBs. Therefore, the information produced is not completely fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.11 Although this Expectation is not met, this is deemed to pose a moderate rather than a serious risk. This can be addressed by the implementation of the three recommendations relating to the production of information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, the provision of programme learning outcomes and external examiner reports, and the affirmation relating to the continued work to standardise student handbooks.

3.12 Overall, the review team concluded that the College requires improvement to meet UK expectations on the quality of the information produced about its provision.

4 Judgement: Enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Findings

4.1 The College Strategic Framework identifies a core value of continuous improvement and providing a first-class service for learners. A focus on the learner voice was one of the strategic aims linked to the College Strategic Framework. The College has a range of mechanisms for students to contribute to quality assurance, including modular reviews, focus groups, a College survey, a system of class representatives, the Student Council, and the Learner Voice Forum. However, it was not evident from the initial information provided how these were brought together and if all of them related to higher education provision. The awarding bodies also have other mechanisms including Higher Education Forums and Programme Management Boards. The Learner Involvement Strategy includes the terms of reference for the newly created Learner Voice Forum, chaired by the Principal, which will be based on cross-cutting themes across all of the College higher education and further education provision. Students are made aware of student representatives, and note that some improvements have been made in the College although there is no explicit link back to show that these are the result of actions following student feedback. The Vice Principal Standards and Learning is responsible for monitoring and tracking College actions linked to the learner voice.

4.2 The review team examined this Expectation by reviewing documentation including the College self-assessment report, policies and meeting minutes and by talking to students, student representatives and staff.

4.3 Key documentation in the College does not specifically refer to 'enhancement', and the term 'enhancement' is not specifically used by staff. Staff were unable to articulate a consistent definition of what 'enhancement' meant to the College or explain how the College took a systematic approach to it. However, the final meeting of the review visit revealed that teaching, learning and assessment are the main drivers of the College's focus on the learner voice and improvement.

4.4 The self-assessment process and production of the annual Self-Assessment Report are comprehensive and well understood by staff at all levels. When prompted, some staff members explained that the annual Self-Assessment Report, Higher Education Progress Reviews and follow-up of actions from these were all part of the College's approach to improvement and had led to action such as supported experiments, assignment writing and also fed into the higher education strategy day. However, the review team found it difficult to identify many points that related specifically to higher education within the College self-assessment report for 2012-13. Brief information is provided in relation to the target to increase higher education success rates to 75 per cent and two learner voice mechanisms are identified specifically for higher education students. However, the major focus is placed on further education course statistics, trends and activities to support progression to higher education, and there is a detailed list of enrichment activities. The numbers of further education students are far greater than those in higher education at the College and many mechanisms are shared effectively. However, there is no detailed and explicit consideration of higher education provision or systematic and clearly articulated approach to enhancement at provider level in this key self-assessment document.

4.5 The College teaching observation process is comprehensive and staff felt that this, along with the allocation of a mentor for new staff, led to improvement in teaching and learning. However, documentation related to staff training and development days did not include any explicit focus on the enhancement of higher education, and there was no evidence provided to the team on how any outcomes or good practice from these days were captured and taken forward. Another staff development initiative is supported experiments where diverse subject areas are paired up, with the assistance of Advanced Practitioners. The team were informed that all actions/good practice points are logged on a central database and the Vice Principal Standards and Learning identifies themes and follows them.

4.6 Higher education students are members of the Student Council and the Learner Voice Forum as discussed under Expectation B5 in this report. However, students are not represented on the Higher Education Strategy Group or the Curriculum Leadership Team which are the two main groups with a remit for oversight of higher education quality and standards. There are limited formal mechanisms for students to participate in discussions and decisions in relation to the identification of enhancement themes or other actions arising from annual monitoring of standards and quality. The review team had difficulty clearly identifying any documented discussion related to enhancement at the Higher Education Strategy Group or the Curriculum Leadership meetings through the minutes provided. In practice, responsibility for enhancement rests largely with the Vice Principal Standards and Learning, therefore the review team **recommends** that the College ensure there is a clearly articulated and systematic College-wide approach to enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.7 Some students felt they had some involvement in deciding College priorities through the newly developed annual learner event, and students are also provided with numerous learner voice survey opportunities. However, students had mixed views in relation to action taken in response to feedback; some students could see action being taken in response to feedback, citing examples of the cash machine and the development of the higher education building, while others said they would like to see more communication on action taken in response to survey feedback. The review team heard from staff that internal marketing processes, visual feedback through notice boards and the Student Council were some of the mechanisms used to communicate updates on action taken to students. The College has a 'You Said, We Did' mechanism for communicating outcomes to students but those met during the review visit did not identify this as a method through which they received feedback on actions taken. The College has future plans linked to the new build to use video screens and a new app to communicate with students. The mixed experiences reported by students therefore support the recommendation outlined in Expectation B5, paragraph 2.28.

4.8 Overall, the review team felt that while there are a range of feedback and monitoring mechanisms that have led to improvement, these tend to be focused more at a programme level. There are limited opportunities for students to contribute to formal College-wide deliberation or discussion on enhancement. The College approach to enhancement is not consistently understood or articulated by staff, and there was a lack of evidence of a systematic approach. Therefore, the review team concluded that the Expectation is not met and that the overall level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

Enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9 In reaching its 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations' judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook and identified two recommendations. One of these recommendations is shared with Expectation B5.

4.10 The review team based the judgement relating to the enhancement of student learning opportunities on the definition of enhancement involving deliberate steps being taken at institutional level. While the College demonstrates a commitment to its students and improving the quality of their learning, it was unable to provide evidence of a consistently articulated and understood institutional-level approach. There are examples of positive developments to enhance student learning opportunities and a range of procedures designed to support student learning, but these do not consistently emanate from an overarching institutional-level approach to enhancement explicitly monitored through College processes.

4.11 Although this Expectation is not met, this is deemed to pose a moderate rather than a serious risk. There is insufficient emphasis placed on the institutional approach to enhancement in the provider's planning processes but this can be addressed by the implementation of the two recommendations provided.

4.12 The review team concluded that the College requires improvement to meet UK expectations relating to the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Findings

5.1 The College has a Learner Involvement Strategy and a broad range of learner feedback mechanisms to enable students to comment on their experience of areas such as teaching, learning and resources. Fourteen higher education student representatives are members of the Student Council, although some of them reported that they tended not to attend the meetings as they did not feel they had a particular focus on higher education. Students commented that the Learner Representative System is effective at programme level and that updates on actions are given within meetings. However, higher education students are not represented on major College committees or review panels and do not play a formal role in curriculum design. Students have the opportunity to provide feedback through a range of surveys but feel that action taken as a result is not communicated effectively.

5.2 The review team considers that more can be done to support student representatives on an ongoing basis, something the College has itself recognised and taken action to address. The College has recently taken steps to bolster the training that representatives receive in partnership with De Montfort University, and students welcomed this. The College has recently launched an annual Learner Conference and this event contains a dedicated higher education strand to enable a greater focus on issues that relate more specifically to higher education students.

5.3 Both students and staff referenced the creation of a new higher education space within the College estate as a positive development which had been driven by student feedback. However, in terms of input into the design of the new space, the review team did not see evidence of any targeted student involvement. Students and staff members were able to comment on the plans for the new building that were posted in the College reception area.

5.4 An annual Learner Voice Forum, chaired by the Principal, has also been instituted whose purpose is to ensure continuous improvement in the learner experience, in part by increasing student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement. Some students met during the review visit highlighted this Learner Voice event as an opportunity to find out what is happening in the College and discuss what changes could be made. This is therefore a positive development in terms of student involvement in quality. The review team felt that a more systematic use of College practice against the Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student engagement* would support the Learner Voice Forum in meeting its objectives.

5.5 Overall, the review team felt that formal student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement is underdeveloped within the College. The College's approach to enhancement is discussed elsewhere in this report, but the team found no consistent evidence at College level that higher education students are involved in discussions to identify themes across the institution or areas within the College that would benefit from improvement. Students met during the visit did, however, report that they valued the accessibility of staff members and the ease with which any issues could be raised and resolved at this level. This accessibility was attributed to the relatively small size of the higher education provision and this 'open office' approach was well received.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 27 to 29 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary.

Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'. See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

Expectations

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

Flexible and distributed learning

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. See also **distance learning**.

Framework

A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

Framework for higher education qualifications

A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland* (FHEQIS).

Good practice

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

Learning opportunities

The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

Learning outcomes

What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

Multiple awards

An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

Operational definition

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

Programme (of study)

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

Programme specifications

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

Public information

Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

Quality Code

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

Reference points

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Subject benchmark statement

A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **subject benchmark statements**.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

Widening participation

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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