Higher Education Review of Hertford Regional College

November 2014

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Hertford Regional College. The review took place from 24 November to 26 November 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Barbara Howell
- Mr Mark Langley
- Miss Zoe Harrison (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Hertford Regional College 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 academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student 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 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing Hertford Regional College 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 2014-15 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.

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[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/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.
[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.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Hertford Regional College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Hertford Regional College.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice** at Hertford Regional College.

- The support provided to academic staff to enhance teaching practice (Expectation B3).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Hertford Regional College.

By April 2015:

- articulate and disseminate the procedures for academic appeals appropriate to each higher education programme (Expectation B9, Information).

By September 2015:

- ensure that there is a formal process for the internal approval and modification of HND programmes (Expectations A3.1, B1)
- further develop the training of student representatives and engage students more effectively as partners (Expectation B5)
- develop across all programmes a consistent approach to the oversight and management of work-based learning (Expectation B10)
- further promote a shared understanding of enhancement across the College's higher education provision (Enhancement).

Theme: Student Employability

The development of employability is an intrinsic focus of the College's vocational education, as outlined in its own strategic objectives. The College offers programmes which aim to develop higher-level vocational skills required by employers in a variety of ways, and it works towards its strategic goals of both preparing students for employment and providing educational services to meet the needs of employers, through the provision of professional and vocational programmes, through employer engagement, and through embedding employability skills into the curriculum.

The College effectively integrates work-based and placement learning into programme design, with the needs of employers considered at course validation. Programmes adopt different approaches to the management of work-based learning and different levels of

support for students, and students clearly value their experience of work-based learning, with each curriculum area being encouraged to develop its own approach to enhancing employability, through live projects, work-based learning and work experience.

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

About Hertford Regional College

Hertford Regional College is a tertiary college situated on two campuses at Broxbourne and at Ware in Hertfordshire. Formed from a merger between two smaller colleges, it offers a wide range of full and part-time programmes, with an emphasis on promoting independence and employability among its students. Its strategic aims include growth of its Higher National provision, the development of scholarship of higher education teaching staff and the upgrading of resources in support of learning.

The College has about 250 students in its higher education provision which is provided in partnership with two universities and with Pearson. Its major partnership is with the University of Hertfordshire which validates the College's Foundation Degree programmes in the areas of business, computing, visual merchandising, creative arts, early years and design, as well as the foundation year of the Extended Degree in Engineering and Technology. In partnership with the University of Greenwich, the College delivers the Diploma in Teaching in the Life-Long Learning Sector, and with Pearson it delivers two Higher National programmes in music and the performing arts.

Since the last QAA review in 2010 the College has successfully bid for its own HEFCE student numbers, allowing it to introduce full-time HN provision in 2013. At the same time, the overall volume of higher education numbers has reduced from about 400 in 2009, largely due to a decline in part-time recruitment. The College has also secured funds to enable completion of the final phase of the development of the Ware campus, which is currently under construction.

The key challenge for the College is to maintain a portfolio of higher and further education programmes which meets the needs of students and employers. In respect of higher education in particular, the College anticipates a gradual increase in recruitment over the coming two or three years, due in large part to the recently-established HN programme.

The outcomes of the previous QAA review in 2010 were positive, with the review identifying five features of good practice, and one advisable and eight desirable recommendations. Since then the College has effectively built on the areas of good practice identified and has completed or has made effective progress towards each of the recommendations.

Explanation of the findings about Hertford Regional College

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: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisation

Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

a) ensure that the requirements of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* are met by:

- **positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications**
- **awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes**

b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics

c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework

d) consider and take account of relevant subject benchmark statements.

Quality Code, *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.1   The College's degree-awarding bodies, the University of Hertfordshire and the University of Greenwich, and its awarding organisation Pearson, are responsible for the setting and maintenance of threshold standards, while the College itself is responsible for the maintenance, delivery and assessment, where relevant, of those standards in line with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

1.2   The College reassures itself that the requirements of the awarding bodies and awarding organisation are met by means of active involvement in the validation and periodic review process as a member of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium and the University of Greenwich Network*.* The College is an approved Pearson Centre and Pearson takes full responsibility for programme development, approval, modification and periodic review. The College has structures in place to monitor and maintain oversight of quality and standards across its higher education provision: these include the Higher Education Programme Committee, Higher Education Management Meetings and the Higher Education Student Forum with each providing direct reporting lines to the College Higher Education Committee. The Higher Education committee meets four times a year and discusses and

approves the annual monitoring reports of individual programmes which contain comment on external examiner reports and consideration of the appropriateness of the standards set.

1.3 The team reviewed the operation and effectiveness of these procedures by looking at the respective partnership agreements, agenda for revalidation, key College and group meeting minutes, programme handbooks, programme specifications, external examiner reports and external verifier feedback and by talking to senior staff.

1.4 The evidence indicates that the procedures used by the College through its committee structures are effective in practice for programmes from its degree-awarding bodies. However the Senior Team acknowledges that although Pearson is responsible for their programmes and the content of each unit therein, there is a need for a formal internal process for the approval of the selection of units which contribute to HN programmes. The review team found that the College effectively fulfils the responsibilities of its partnership agreements for maintaining the standards of the awards it offers, and it therefore concludes that Expectation A1 is met and that the associated risk level is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.5   The College refers to its degree-awarding bodies for academic governance arrangements, regulations and policies relating to academic matters. The regulatory frameworks of these bodies determine the academic standards of each programme. The Consortium agreement describes the role of the Consortium Quality Committee in taking responsibility for advising and monitoring on issues of academic quality for the delivery of programmes. Similarly the Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Greenwich and the College describes a Network Management Committee for consideration of strategic direction of the network and provides updates via network meetings. Pearson takes responsibility for its compliance with the academic framework and regulations, and checks that all centres are working to national standards as set out in the BTEC UK Quality Assurance Handbook 2014-15. The College's approach to these arrangements enables the expectation to be met.

1.6   The team reviewed the College's approach by considering the partnership agreements with awarding bodies, minutes of meetings of the University of Greenwich Network and Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium committees, the Student Submission and in meetings with the Principal and with senior staff.

1.7   The team found that the structures in place align to the respective partnership agreements, with the College's Higher Education Committee providing the quality link to the University of Hertfordshire via the Consortium Quality Committee, and the Sector Network Coordinator providing the key link between the College and the University of Greenwich. The team noted that College staff attend Network and Consortium meetings which deliberate on academic arrangements at the College including consideration of programme committees, cross-moderation, assessment, examination boards, annual monitoring and review, and re-validation.

1.8   The team considers that the College has effective structures in place and carries out its responsibilities effectively as set out in the agreement documents and therefore concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.9   The responsibility for maintaining definitive records of individual programmes and qualifications rests with the awarding bodies. The University of Hertfordshire provides programme specifications for each programme, along with a definitive module document for each module. The University of Greenwich also supplies a programme specification for its Initial Teacher Training (ITT) qualification. While Pearson is responsible for maintaining a record of programmes and qualifications leading to Higher National awards, the College is responsible for defining the individual record of specific units which make up each Higher National programme. The responsibility for ensuring that the approved programme specifications are used as the reference point for the delivery of the programme rests with the College.

1.10   The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements for the maintenance of individual programmes and qualifications by scrutinising programme specifications, definitive module documents, programme handbooks, and the quality procedures of the University of Hertfordshire, the University of Greenwich, and Pearson. The team also had discussions with senior staff, teaching staff, support staff and students.

1.11   The review team noted that the College does not have a formal process for approving new, or modifying existing, programme specifications for Pearson programmes and formed the view that the College should develop a well-defined process for this purpose.

1.12   Students confirmed that the relevant specifications are available via the programme handbook for University of Hertfordshire provision and for Pearson provision, and via the trainee handbook for University of Greenwich provision. All include details of the units and modules the students will be required to undertake as part of their programme, programme content, learning outcomes and modes of assessment. Staff also confirmed in discussions that programme specifications and module/unit specifications are used as reference points for delivery and assessment.

1.13   The College is clear about its responsibility for the maintenance of Pearson programmes, and understands the responsibilities of its university partners. The review team concludes that the College is aware of the degree-awarding bodies' responsibility for maintaining definitive records of individual programmes and qualifications. The College also understands its responsibility for maintaining these for Pearson provision, although it recognises the need to formalise this process. Therefore, the team considers that Expectation A2.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.14   The awarding universities are responsible for the final approval of modules, programmes and the qualifications they validate. Quality Assurance Handbooks for each university clearly set out the development and approval procedures for new programmes. Pearson designs all units for its qualifications, and the College selects units to create programmes of study.

1.15   The oversight of each awarding institution ensures that the academic standards meet the UK threshold standard for the relevant qualification and are in accordance with each university's academic frameworks and regulations. Each university approves its own programmes within a collaborative network of partner colleges. This inclusive process facilitates staff engagement with the Quality Code as well as with each university's policies and procedures. Although the College recognises the need to develop an internal programme approval process for its Higher National programmes (see Expectation B1), the unit descriptors provided by Pearson ensure that levels of study are in line with the threshold standard for the qualifications.

1.16   During its desk-based review, the team considered a range of programme and quality handbooks from the College and its awarding bodies and met with senior, teaching and university staff to clarify its reading of the differing processes of programme approval at the universities and within the College for the Pearson programmes.

1.17   The University of Hertfordshire consults staff at all colleges within the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium, enabling them to contribute to the process of programme approval and subsequent modifications. The University also gathers module feedback through its electronic programme organiser file system, ensuring that all parties within the Consortium consider fully any new programmes or revisions. For the University of Greenwich programme, a similar consortium-based process ensures rigorous consultation. Pearson designs all units for its qualifications, ensuring the integrity of the programme at unit level.

1.18   The team considers the College's engagement with programme approval processes to be sound and in alignment with *Chapter A3* of the Quality Code. The team concludes that the College meets the expectation and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.19   Students at the College gain credit for their qualifications through assessment of the intended learning outcomes of their programmes. Externally managed programme and unit approval (see A3.1) ensures that learning outcomes satisfy UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the awarding bodies. Rigorous assessment verification (see B6) ensures that assessment activities support the achievement of relevant learning outcomes.

1.20   In testing the College's procedures, the review team met College staff and students, and looked at a range of programme documentation, awarding body regulations, internal verification paperwork and external examiners' reports.

1.21   The College meets the expectation because internally verified assessment activities reflect the learning outcomes of the externally approved programmes, modules and units. Course handbooks, module documents and programme specifications for all of the College's higher education programmes feature clear and explicit learning outcomes. Cross-consortium and internal verification systems ensure that assessment activities observe the regulations for each awarding body. These processes are thorough and assessment processes provide students with appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes. The University of Hertfordshire has clear regulations and procedures to govern the award of credit and qualifications. Key features of these procedures include support for students with additional needs and clarification of moderation processes across the consortium. Each partner College takes lead-responsibility for confirming the content and assessment activities for a module, notifying the other partners of any changes within a pre-agreed timeframe. The University of Greenwich designs assessment activities in consultation with its partners. External examiners for both universities confirm that learning outcomes inform assessment activities.

1.22   For the Pearson programmes, the College operates an internal verification system. In addition, during the initial phases of the music and performing arts programmes, the College used Pearson's checking service to clarify the content of assignment briefs. External verifiers suggest further developments to underpin learning outcomes with greater clarity, which the College subsequently tracks through its annual monitoring process. Students on all programmes confirm they are clear about the learning outcomes they must attain.

1.23   The cross-college network for the University of Hertfordshire, the consultative approach of the University of Greenwich and the external verification of internal assignment setting for Pearson programmes, are all highly effective. The College meets Expectation A3.2*;* experience of the three awarding partners' systems informs a College-wide approach to assessment, ensuring that the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.24   To ensure the maintenance of academic standards, the College follows its university partners' annual monitoring and periodic review processes. Currently, Pearson programmes do not require annual monitoring or periodic review.

1.25   The College meets the expectation by engaging fully with the annual monitoring and review process of each awarding body. University annual monitoring processes also include the findings of any periodic review. Currently, Pearson does not use annual review, although the College has engaged with Pearson's annual monitoring pilot scheme. The College finds the University of Hertfordshire process more exacting and has adopted this for its Higher National provision.

1.26   The review team examined annual monitoring processes by reading the quality handbooks for each awarding body, looking at templates and completed examples of annual reports. During the review visit, the team spoke to teaching staff to confirm their engagement with these processes.

1.27   Curriculum managers complete annual programme monitoring reports for the relevant university. For each university, these reports contribute to a view of the provision across the relevant network, meetings of which monitor action plans. For all programmes, the College also requires an internal annual monitoring report and these progress through the College's quality system to ensure the completion of action plans. Heads of Curriculum draw on these reports to complete a self-assessment report for their curriculum area containing both further and higher education provision. The Higher Education Development Manager then draws on these reports to produce a Higher Education Self-Assessment Report. These four processes provide a failsafe system to ensure that the College resolves all action points.

1.28   All university validated programmes are subject to periodic review. For University of Hertfordshire programmes this happens every six years and takes the form of a revalidation event. University of Greenwich programmes have a maximum approval period of five years, after which programmes are subject to review. Pearson does not use periodic review, but does make centre visits. For the last three years the College has had no essential actions following these visits and has been re-certified. In all instances, action plans either enter the relevant annual monitoring report, or the Curriculum Self-Assessment Report, or both. This ensures completion of any conditions or recommendations.

1.29   The College meets Expectation A3.3 by using a thorough approach to monitoring that crosses three different quality systems. The fact that the College recognised the Pearson pilot as still requiring further development and has adopted its own version demonstrates a thorough approach to programme review and indicates that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.30   The requirements for external input as part of the validation and revalidation process are set out in the University of Hertfordshire's Periodic Review Handbook and the University of Greenwich's Quality Assurance Handbook. External examiners are selected and appointed by the awarding bodies for the monitoring and review of their academic standards.

1.31   The team confirmed these arrangements through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students, a review of external examiner reports and the annual monitoring reports which contain details of any issues raised by the external examiner and the action taken.

1.32   In their reports, external examiners generally agreed or strongly agreed that the process of assessment was fair and that standards are comparable with those of other institutions. The reports as set out in the annual monitoring reports generally confirmed that all points of concern raised in the previous year's external examiner reports have been addressed.

1.33   There is evidence of employer engagement on many programmes. Most programmes have a work-based learning element with students undertaking a form of placement activity supported by contact with employers. Students on these programmes clearly valued their experience of work-based learning. There is nevertheless scope on some programmes to develop employer opportunities further, as discussed elsewhere. There is further evidence of effective engagement with external examiners through feedback and in following up on actions as part of the approval process of Annual Monitoring Reports and Programme Monitoring Reports, which are considered at the College's Higher Education Committee**.**

1.34   The review team considers that the College's processes ensure externality as part of the Higher Education Committee structure, through employer engagement and through actions from and follow-ups of external examiners' reports. The review team concludes that the expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisation: Summary of findings

1.35   The College's responsibilities relating to the expectations detailed in *Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards* of the Quality Code have all been met with low risk. There are no findings of good practice, and the team does not make any recommendations or affirmations.

1.36   The review team confirms that the College, in partnership with its two awarding bodies and awarding organisation, maps higher education provision to programme outcomes and external benchmarks associated with the FHEQ. Transparent and coherent academic frameworks and regulations are used to govern how credit and qualifications are awarded.

1.37   Definitive records for each programme and qualification approved by the respective awarding body or organisation are maintained, and these records constitute the reference point for all subsequent delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of higher education provision. These records are available to students.

1.38   Programmes are approved through the use of processes that ensure standards are set at appropriate levels within institutional frameworks, and academic credit is awarded where relevant learning outcomes are achieved through assessment.

1.39   On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concludes that the maintenance of academic standards at Hertford Regional College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes

Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval*

Findings

2.1   The awarding universities set out the processes for the design and approval of programmes and strategically lead any development through their consortium networks. The College has an internal process of programme approval for its Higher National programmes, but this focuses on financial rather than academic issues.

2.2   The oversight of the awarding universities and an informal process of programme approval for Pearson programmes enable the College to meet the expectation. The College's engagement with the universities' consortium networks ensures that for its university programmes the process of programme development is secure. Informally, it observes a similar process when selecting units for the Pearson programmes. The College recognises that a formal process would clarify programme approval for higher national courses, for example it would avoid units being confused within programme handbooks. The team **recommends** that the College should ensure there is a formal process for the internal approval and modification of HND programmes.

2.3   The team reviewed programme handbooks, approval processes and quality handbooks in advance of the review visit. In meetings with college and some university staff, the team explored external and internal approval processes. During the review the College identified the need to make improvements to the way it develops its Higher National programme.

2.4   For University of Hertfordshire programmes, staff across the consortium help university colleagues to develop programme content. This is a highly consultative process that draws on employer feedback. The University of Greenwich has responsibility for the design and approval of its programmes, but College staff offer suggestions in an advisory capacity. Pearson designs the units for all of its programmes but the College's course teams determine the choice of units. The appropriate Head of Department then completes a New Course Approval Form that the Vice-Principal for Curriculum and Quality accepts or rejects. This process focuses on financial issues but does not elucidate the rationale behind the unit choices. A formal process would also support any programme modifications and ensure the academic integrity of programmes and their coherence with external reference points.

2.5   The College meets the Expectation in *Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval.* For university awarded programmes, the process of programme approval and modification is secure, and although the current informal process for the internal approval of Pearson programmes works, the lack of formal oversight presents a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission*

Findings

2.6   The College's responsibility for admissions is determined by each awarding body and is outlined in each of their agreements. Applications for admission to the University of Hertfordshire programmes are made through UCAS. For programmes where interview or audition is required, the College undertakes these and makes offers for art and design programmes. The College is supported by the central admissions team at the University of Hertfordshire in carrying out these responsibilities. Students applying to the University of Greenwich programme make applications directly to the College, which is responsible for interviewing candidates and for making offers of admission. The College has created and maintains a UCAS website for its Pearson provision. This manages applications made to the College and allows the College to administer applications and interviews for performing arts and music programmes.

2.7   The meeting with senior staff confirmed the University of Hertfordshire's, the University of Greenwich's, and the College's individual responsibilities for admissions. Senior staff emphasised the College's responsibility for establishing fair and thorough processes for the admission of students. Students confirmed that their admission onto programmes had progressed without difficulty and that an instance of miscommunication between the University of Hertfordshire and the College has since been resolved.

2.8   The review team received a draft copy of the College's Admissions Policy prior to the review and noted that it will enable the College to demonstrate fair and transparent processes for student admission. The policy is now approved and is available on the College's website. In discussion with senior staff, reviewers were able to confirm that staff training for UCAS processes has been completed. The review team concludes that College staff are suitably prepared for the admissions responsibilities for its students.

2.9   The work of the Recruitment and Admissions Sub-Committee, which reports to the Consortium Management Committee, is intended to ensure parity between the consortium colleges and the University of Hertfordshire. The team formed the view that the Recruitment and Admissions Sub-Committee is effective in ensuring that the College's practice is consistent with consortium policy.

2.10   The review team formed the view that the College's processes and the recent establishment of its Admissions Policy are effective in meeting the requirements of its awarding partners and are understood by staff and students. Therefore, the expectation is met and the level of risk is 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

2.11   The College takes a strategic approach to learning and teaching as set out in its Teaching and Learning policy, encompassing the associated universities' and Pearson's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies. The focus of strategic discussion takes place at the HHEC Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee of the Consortium Management Committee and the College Improving Teaching and Learning Group. The College validating partner expects the institution to subscribe to the attainment of the respective Learning, Teaching and Assessment Principles. It is also expected that institutions will have an appropriate learning and teaching strategy to support the policy and principles, and encompass the University's graduate attributes.

2.12   The College has Equality and Diversity policies based on both the College and University principles, to effectively integrate into all aspects of higher education provision including the learning opportunities and assessment strategies. The College Resourcing Policy and Processes, Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Procedures, College Appraisal Policy and Guidance on Professional Development 2013-14, and Consortium Quality Handbook 2013-14 ensure programmes are delivered and managed and ongoing quality is measured. The College therefore has effective processes in place to meet the Expectation.

2.13   The review team checked the College's approach to teaching and learning and its functions by meeting with the Principal, senior staff, teaching staff, support staff and students and by considering relevant documentation such as the Student Submission, the Learner Journey Handbook, staff development agendas, Higher Education Programme Managers' meeting minutes, the lesson observation scheme and the appraisal scheme.

2.14   The review team learnt of a recently appointed team of Advanced Skills Teaching and Learning Practitioners (ASTLPs) led by an HE specialist, whose purpose is to ensure that higher education teachers have pedagogic support. The College has in place an Improving Teaching and Learning Group, of which each ASTLP is a member, for the development and coordination of the observations of teaching. The review team confirmed that the Higher Education Programme Manager meetings include discussion and responses to topics including course reviews, applications, new teaching arrangements to include facilitators, student survey results and online marking.

2.15   The quality of teaching is measured through the lesson observation scheme and the appraisal scheme. Heads of Department, in consultation with the Vice-Principal for Curriculum & Quality and the Director of Academic Quality & Development, plan the observations of the Department's provision. Two types of observation are carried out: graded observations for the purposes of providing feedback to support improvements and to monitor quality; and ungraded peer and reflective observations which are a valuable form of sharing good practice. Staff are observed on an annual basis, with staff on their probationary period receiving a first formal observation at six weeks and another at 18 weeks. There are also opportunities to peer observe at the partner universities and the review team view this approach to peer observation as good practice.

2.16   The College supports continuous professional development as detailed in its Guidance on Professional Development. The team learnt of a programme of CPD days with on-line activities and contact with employers to help staff keep up to date, but noted that the College experienced some difficulties with the practicalities of releasing staff for scholarly activity. The team heard of significant training for new staff covering moderation, standardising assessment, using StudyNet, and lesson observation. The team noted the annual staff development conference for members of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium as well as the staff development activities that have taken place in the period 2010 to 2014: the latter included specific higher education development sessions, many generic topics across further education and higher education provision and significant training on peer observation. The Learner Journey Handbook Supplement further comments on scholarly activity as an essential requirement for staff teaching higher education to be incorporated into each individual programme of staff development activities.

2.17   In meetings, students said that they found the College supportive, that the quality of teaching was very good and teachers were responsive and approachable. The students valued the small classes, one-to-one support, open and clear feedback, mentors to help with school-based learning and the opportunity to engage in work-based learning. The College is in the process of designing a student charter and the review team confirmed that a draft had been produced.

2.18   The team concludes that the College has an effective strategy in place to deliver and review its learning and teaching provision. It also demonstrates the capacity to identify and address issues for development. The team viewed the introduction of the dedicated higher education support team, comprehensive peer observation scheme, and staff development for new staff is making a positive contribution to the quality of provision and concluded that the support provided to academic staff to enhance teaching practice is good practice. Therefore Expectation B3 is met and the level of 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

2.19   The College provides appropriate resources across both campuses, each with an open access Learning Resource Centre, and computing and printing facilities. Students are provided with an induction programme and a single point of contact for learning support. The College believes that it provides a well-established tutorial support system, whereby each student meets with their personal tutor on a regular basis, with group tutorials and personal development planning embedded into programmes. The College also describes graduate level skills and group work to improve teamwork (within the Creative Enterprise programmes).

2.20   Student Services ensure that students are provided with equal and effective learning opportunities and that career advice is available to all students via a team of qualified career advisors. The College has recently re-established links with the University of Hertfordshire's careers service to provide information and links for all students. The College's approach and policies and processes enable Expectation B4 to be met.

2.21   The review team met senior staff, teaching staff, support staff and students to test how the support, learning resources and facilities provided to higher education students are maintained and developed in practice. The team also scrutinised documentation relating to the mechanisms used to support students, the outputs from the careers service and Higher Education Student Forum notes*.*

2.22   In meeting students, the team confirmed the nature and value of the induction programmes which included key aspects of study, environment, student services, behavioural expectations and an overview of policies and processes that apply to higher education provision.

2.23   Students expressed positive views about the quality and availability of learning resources, while mentioning some concerns about the opening hours of the Learning Resource Centre for part-time students, the availability of internet access in the Creative Arts Building, the currency of computing equipment and the availability of industry-standard software for one of the programmes. The College recognised that some facilities were in need of improvement and believed that the new building planned to be in place next year would resolve these issues. The staff were aware of issues raised by the students and, in drawing attention to the fact that some issues, including software availability, had already been resolved, confirmed that an annual planning process takes place in the departments, with each bidding for funds for new equipment and software needs. The College also has in place a replacement cycle for IT. The team further learnt that students have an opportunity to raise resource issues at student council with the head of IT services and the head of e-learning in attendance.

2.24   Details of all University of Hertfordshire careers services are available on their open access website. Staff, current students and recent alumni can access the Career Hub using their StudyNet log-ins. By agreement, the College's careers advisors can access and use this information for all higher education students at the College. The College Career Advisors provide face to face impartial careers guidance episodes, careers education sessions, workshops, and email and telephone advice Staff confirmed the availability of careers advisors through one-to-one meetings and drop-in sessions, and further described

dedicated resources which permit programme leaders to request employability sessions and support for curriculum design, and enable well-connected vocational tutors available to help students to find placements; the team noted however that there is no specific handbook for placements across higher education. Students generally spoke positively about the opportunities for placements, work-based learning and employability fairs. The team also reviewed a number of example activities within programmes to enhance employability: for instance most programmes include a final-year project with students presenting their findings to employers.

2.25   The review team concludes that the College has a coordinated approach to the support of students, through induction, tutorial support and the personal tutor systems through to employment. It integrates work-based learning into programmes and employability into the curriculum. The College reviews resources on an annual basis and has plans to improve its current facilities with a new purpose-built building. Therefore Expectation B4 is met and the associated level of risk is 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

2.26   The College is committed to engaging students as partners in their educational experience, as outlined in the College's Student Handbook. Student engagement is actively promoted at all levels of programme development. The College's mechanisms for obtaining student feedback are the Higher Education Student Forum, the Student Council, programme committees, and informally between students and tutors. The College also uses national and internal surveys to capture students' feedback. The College has a student representative system that seeks to represent all students on all programmes at every level of study. Staff encourage students to engage in these opportunities and recognise the importance of having such representational structures. Results from the National Student Survey (NSS) and First Impressions Survey are disseminated to staff and students through HRC's committee structure and directly to Heads of Departments. Feedback is also captured through Module Evaluation Forms and Annual Monitoring Evaluation Reports.

2.27   The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach to student engagement by talking to senior staff, teaching staff, support staff and a wide and representative cross section of students. The review team also scrutinised the College's Student Handbook, programme committee minutes, Higher Education Student Forum minutes, and internal and external survey data.

2.28   While the College endeavours to engage all students in the formal representational structures/mechanisms that exist, it recognises that students are less likely to engage in these processes that seek to capture the collective student voice. Student representatives told the review team that although they valued the importance of their role, they felt they were left to develop the role themselves. Senior staff confirmed that training was provided for student representatives on University of Hertfordshire programmes, but student representatives on other programmes felt that they too could benefit from higher education-specific training. Student representatives confirmed that they felt their input was valued on committee meetings, and through informal mechanisms between staff and students. When the review team spoke to students who were not representatives, only a minority stated that they would engage with their representatives when wishing to raise matters concerning programme delivery, and would instead turn to their tutors for support in the first instance, particularly part-time students. With a view to ensuring that processes are embedded in practice, the review team therefore recommends that the College should further develop the training of student representatives and engage students more effectively as partners.

2.29   The team concludes that the student representation structure works for the current scale of provision, but is insufficiently formalised to embed the student voice in its practices. The structure currently relies on the approachability of individual members of the College's staff and their consequent one-to-one contact with students. Therefore, the team concludes that Expectation B5 is met, and that the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*

Findings

2.30   As noted in A3.2, university programme validation processes and Pearson-designed units embed learning outcomes in each programme. For University awards, partnership networks collectively devise assessment activities. For Pearson programmes, the College's internal verification system ensures that assessment processes are equitable, valid and reliable.

2.31   As a member of two partnership networks, the College receives significant support. Quality handbooks for each university set out regulations and procedures. For the University of Hertfordshire the College contributes to assessment design as a member of the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium planning team. For University of Greenwich programmes, Networking Meetings provide an informal means of contributing to assessment design. The College's own internal verification system supports the design of assessment activities for Pearson programmes. External verifiers affirm the suitability of assessment activities or make helpful suggestions where appropriate. Course handbooks set out the regulations governing late submissions, extenuating circumstances and retake opportunities. The College engages with recognition of prior learning only for its university awarded programmes. In these instances, the universities take responsibility for processing applications.

2.32   The team reviewed quality handbooks, and external examiner and verifier reports prior to the visit to determine the nature of assessment procedures and practices. Meetings with staff explored the effectiveness of the practices and meetings with students explored their perceptions concerning assessment.

2.33   Engagement with each university consortium means that after initial marking by College staff, second marking and moderation crosses the consortium to ensure standardisation. For Pearson programmes, College staff undertake internal verification. External verifier reports indicate that these processes are rigorous. In accord with the requirements of the two partnership networks, the College aims to return work within four weeks. Students on all programmes confirm that staff return feedback on students' work within two weeks and that moderation processes take a further two weeks. Students also confirm that feedback is timely, constructive and supports their learning.

2.34   For university-awarded programmes, the oversight of the universities ensures that assessment is equitable, valid and reliable across their respective networks. Rigorous internal verification processes ensure that the College applies the same principles to its Pearson programmes. This is a complete and considered approach. Therefore the College meets the Expectation and the associated level of 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

2.35   External examiners are selected and appointed by the awarding bodies for the monitoring and review of academic standards of their degree programmes. In the case of University of Hertfordshire, the College is required to ensure that the partner receives and considers external examiner reports in its programme committees, and to support the partner in formulating any necessary actions within annual monitoring. Comments from the University's external examiners are further considered at the module assessment board and by the University's Centre for Academic Quality Assurance. In the case of University of Greenwich programmes, external examiners' comments and recommendations form part of the Programme Monitoring Report (PMR). Pearson appoints a Standards Verifier whose role is set out in the quality handbook. Follow-up actions recommended by external examiners are an integral part of the quality process and are carried out by the members of the awarding Assessment Board.

2.36   In testing the College's procedures, the review team met senior staff, teaching staff and students. The team also looked at the Consortium Quality Handbook 2013-14, Collaborative Working Practices Handbook Sept 2012, University of Greenwich academic regulations, external examiners' reports, Standards Verifier's report, assessment board minutes, and programme monitoring and annual review materials

2.37   The team confirmed that the responsibility for appointment of the external examiners rests with the awarding body or with Pearson in the case of the Standards Verifier, and that examiners attend award boards at the partner institutions. The team confirmed that full consideration of external examiner reports at the College takes place as part of annual monitoring and of periodic review, with further consideration of action plans at monthly department team meetings.

2.38   Students attending programme committees have the opportunity to see external examiner reports. The students who met the team confirmed that most external examiner reports are available and have been seen by students.

2.39   The review team considers that the College has effective processes for the use of external examiners and for monitoring and actioning issues from external examiners' reports. The team therefore concludes that the College meets Expectation B7 and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*

Findings

2.40   As described in A3.3 the College engages with the annual monitoring and review processes for each of its awarding universities and is developing a review process for its Pearson programmes. The College monitors the implementation of all subsequent action plans through its internal quality systems and for the university programmes through the relevant collaborative network.

2.41   The College meets the expectation through its own internal monitoring process and those of the awarding universities. For university programmes the College completes an annual report in each university's required format. The content is generally consistent with the requirements set out in the universities' quality handbooks. University link tutors support the writing of the reports, which draw on module evaluations, external examiner reports, award boards and staff comments. The universities receive the reports through their committee structures and track responses to the resulting action plans throughout the year.

2.42   Simultaneously the College operates its own programme review process. Internal programme reports mirror the information provided for the university processes and encompass the Pearson programmes. This review process has three annual assessment points that align with key points in the higher education cycle and enable the College to respond to university processes. The College's Academic Management Group receives and monitors these reports. Subsequently, the Higher Education Development Manager produces an annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report that draws together all higher education issues across the College and the Higher Education Committee monitors this throughout the year. This process ensures that the College monitors its own action plans and those of the awarding universities.

2.43   The team considered the quality handbooks for each awarding body along with review process templates and completed examples of annual reports. During the review visit, the team spoke to staff to confirm their engagement with these processes.

2.44   The College observes university requirements diligently. Each university shares monitoring information across its partnership network, ensuring a standardised approach to the writing and monitoring of action plans. The College's internal process aligns with university requirements and ensures the monitoring and checking of all action plans. Having engaged with the Pearson pilot scheme, the College recognises that its quality process for Pearson programmes requires further development and is moving to its own version of the University of Hertfordshire model. While the process is secure, it does not currently enable a focused approach to highlighting enhancement.

2.45   The College meets Expectation B8 by ensuring it engages fully with both external and internal quality processes. The overview of both universities across their partner networks and the identification of a clear higher education strand within the College process ensures that the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*

Findings

2.46   The College has a number of procedures open to students who may wish to appeal against an assessment decision or to make a complaint about provision. Although the College values the relationships between staff and students as an informal means of resolving such issues, there are defined processes to permit escalation if necessary. There is a clear and well-defined process for students on University of Hertfordshire programmes as set out in its Student Complaints procedure: students wishing to appeal against an assessment decision made by the university may do so through the university's Assessment Procedures**.** Students on the University of Greenwich programme or on an HN programme instead follow the College's procedure in the first instance. The College deals with non-academic complaints through its Complaints, Comments and Compliments procedure, and the Quality Coordinator has responsibility for dealing with formal complaints that may arise.

2.47   To test the effectiveness of the College's procedures, the review team scrutinised each awarding body's procedures, the College's complaints record and the information available to students through student handbooks and the VLE. The team also met senior staff and students to test their understanding of the processes.

2.48   Reviewers formed the view that the College's relationship with its students provides a strong foundation for the informal resolution of issues. Students confirmed that they would approach their tutors in the first instance when issues arose and that alternatively they would look for the relevant process on the VLE or in the Student Handbook. Although the Student Handbook signposts students to the appeals process of the College rather than that of the university, students on university programmes confirmed that they understood their right to use the university's procedures for appeals. However for students on the University of Greenwich programme, reviewers noted lack of clarity in respect of the appeals process open to them, in that while students are directed to use the College's process as detailed in its Assessment Procedure, that process does not make clear how it interacts with the university's process.

2.49   Students on a Pearson programme who may wish to appeal against an assessment decision are directed to use the College's process**.** However reviewers found that students were not aware of their right to use this process, although they did confirm that they would first approach their tutor for advice or look on the VLE if they needed to**.** While noting that Pearson delegates to the College the responsibility to ensure that there is an appeals process in place for students on HND programmes, reviewers heard from College staff that there is not an higher education-specific appeals process for students on HND programmes.

2.50   The review team concludes that the appeals processes open to students on Pearson programmes and to those on programmes of the University of Greenwich do not make clear how they are aligned with the requirements of each awarding body and therefore **recommend** that the College articulates and disseminates the procedures for academic appeals appropriate to each higher education programme.

2.51   The team find that the College's procedure regarding student complaints is clear and effective, but that the appeals procedures and related definitions lack clarity and

consistency. The team, therefore, concludes that the expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.52   The College's provision delivered with others takes the form of work placements and work-based learning. The College offers a range of foundation degrees in partnership with employers who offer placement weeks, live briefs and work-related projects. The College also makes use of the services of fractional and hourly paid teaching staff who are also practicing professionals in their field.

2.53   The review team tested the College's arrangements for the management of higher education provision with others by examining the documentation provided by the College for students and for employers, and by meeting with the Principal, teaching staff, support staff, employers and students.

2.54   The College provided a number of examples of the relevance of its programmes to the enhancement of employability. Most programmes include a final year project with students presenting their findings to employers. Students confirmed that they had placements or work-based learning opportunities (the terms placement and work-based learning were used interchangeably by the College). However, policy was variable across the programmes. For example, students on teaching practice commented on a good level of support, with immediate and supportive feedback and advice for teaching on difficult placements. Students on other programmes were encouraged to create their own links with a company for work-based projects, while some were encouraged to register with agencies and make their own contacts with a view to getting auditions. Although tutor-led and hence dependent on the experience of individual tutors, it was evident that practice is effective in enabling students to benefit from workplace experience.

2.55   The team confirmed that documentation was available for both staff and students for the work-based project module on the Foundation Degree in Business and for the mentor scheme for the ITT provision. In reviewing feedback from employers participating in work-based learning, reviewers noted their view that improvements could be made to the support provided for them: reviewers heard that one had not received any guidance on the College's expectations. Employers further suggested that the College could develop greater opportunities to work together with its employer partners to the benefit of students. The review team noted that each department was responsible for managing its students' placements and that discussions about the experience take place between the project or programme manager and each student. Staff further confirmed that in respect of supporting work-based learning students there is no institutional policy and a diversity of practice, with some informal arrangements, some paper-based, some locally determined and some but not all including visits to placement students by College staff.

2.56   Overall, the team found that the College has effective policies and procedures in place to manage work-based learning at programme level. However the review team recommends that the institution develop across all programmes a consistent approach to the oversight and management of work-based learning. The team concludes that Expectation B10 is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.57   This expectation is not applicable to the College as it does not offer research degrees.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.58   The College's higher education provision is offered in partnership with its three degree-awarding partners, the Universities of Hertfordshire and of Greenwich, and Pearson. With its university partners it has secure procedures for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its programmes. In respect of Pearson programmes, while processes for the design and approval of Pearson programmes have been suitable for current provision the review team **recommends** that the College ensures there is a formal process for the internal approval and modification of HND programmes.

2.59   The College's processes for the admission of students are well-understood and are suitably aligned with those of its awarding partners. Students expressed positive views about the quality of teaching and the support for learning, and reviewers found that the College has an effective strategy for supporting the quality of teaching and learning. In particular its support for academic staff to enhance teaching practice is **good practice**.

2.60   Student support in the College is well-coordinated through induction and tutorial support via the personal tutor systems. Work-based learning is integrated into the curriculum of many programmes, but support is variable and dependant on the experience of individual tutors. The College reviews its resource provision annually and has plans to improve its current facilities for higher education students in a new purpose-built building.

2.61   The College is committed to engaging students as partners in their educational experience. It has well-established processes for hearing student views, including the Higher Education Student Forum, the Student Council, programme committees, and informally between students and tutors. It has a student representative system that seeks to represent all students on all programmes at every level of study. Although these structures work for the current scale of provision, they are insufficiently formalised to embed the student voice in its practices. The review team **recommends** that the College should further develop the training of student representatives and engage students more effectively as partners.

2.62   Learning outcomes are suitably embedded in the assessment of the College's programmes, and are verified through the College's own processes as well as those of its awarding bodies. The College has a complete and considered approach to managing assessment, which ensures that the assessment of students is equitable, valid and reliable.

2.63   External examiners and verifiers are selected and appointed by the College's awarding bodies for the monitoring and review of academic standards of their programmes. The College has appropriate processes for the use of external examiners and for monitoring and actioning issues from their annual reports. Full consideration of reports takes place as part of annual monitoring and of periodic review, with further consideration of action plans at monthly department team meetings.

2.64   The College has a procedure for hearing and responding to student complaints which is clear and effective. However its procedures for hearing and responding to appeals against the outcomes of assessments lack clarity and consistency, and the review team recommends that the College articulates and disseminates the procedures for academic appeals appropriate to each higher education programme.

2.65   The College's provision includes work placements and work-based learning carried out in partnership with employers. Its support for these activities is effective in enabling students to benefit from workplace experience, but is variable in nature and extent across its programmes. The review team recommends that the College develops a consistent approach to the oversight and management of work-based learning.

3 Judgement: The 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 publishes information about its Higher Education provision primarily through its website, its prospectus, the VLE, the Student Handbook and individual programme handbooks.

3.2 In order to verify that information provided by the College is fit-for-purpose, trustworthy and accessible, the review team met senior staff, academic staff, support staff, employers and students and scrutinised the documentation itself.

3.3 Detailed information about the College's higher education provision is available through the College's website which provides a comprehensive range of information about its programmes. The prospectus for full-time and for part-time study is available electronically as well as in hard copy and extensively details the College's programmes, the qualifications required for entry, fee structures, and the support available to students. It also includes a Higher Education section which describes the nature of higher education study at the College. Programme Managers, heads of department and the Higher Education Manager annually check the accuracy of this information before publication.

3.4 Information relating to University of Hertfordshire provision is cross-audited annually by the University and the College to ensure consistency across the Consortium. The Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium marketing sub-group is responsible for the copy, production and accuracy of shared information, ensuring consistency of information made available by the College, the University of Hertfordshire and UCAS.

3.5 Students on University of Hertfordshire provision may use the University's VLE to access programme handbooks produced by the programme link tutor at the University, as well as policies, procedures and supplementary information relating to their programme. Students on University of Greenwich provision are provided with a hard copy of their course handbook and guide. Also available electronically, this explains general course information, learning outcomes, and policies and procedures relating to their programme, as well as signposts to additional information which students may need.

3.6 Students on Pearson provision receive a hard copy of their programme handbook, which is produced to a College standard based on Pearson's guidelines. This includes information about the College, its policies, qualifications and grading, and an outline of the units and learning outcomes, as well as the relevant programme specification.

3.7 At enrolment, all students receive copies of the College's student handbook, as well as information from the awarding institution. Reviewers confirmed from outcomes of the College's 'First Impressions Survey' as well as in discussion with students that the information received by students is useful to them, and is available on the VLE as well as in hard copy format. Reviewers noted that the College is developing a Student Charter.

3.8 The review team's meeting with support staff highlighted a rigorous process for ensuring that information is accurate. Prospectuses are approved prior to publication by the

Higher Education Manager, Programme Managers, and the Marketing and Communications Manager. Website content is the responsibility of the Programme Managers, but it is also audited by the marketing department. The University of Hertfordshire also audits information as described above; Consortium members check each other's information using a common checklist to ensure consistency. There are formal processes for requesting and recording changes whose urgency is determined by a priority scale.

3.9   Overall, the review team formed the view that the College provides sufficient and relevant information for its intended audiences, particularly prospective and current students. It has effective procedures in place for ensuring the accuracy of information about its higher education provision. Students and staff confirmed that the sources of information available to them are fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team, therefore, concludes that Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of the information produced about its provision: Summary of findings

3.10   The review team found that the College consistently provides accessible and clear information for the public about its higher education provision, and has developed systems and procedures for designing and publishing information for a variety of stakeholders, leading to the availability of paper-based and electronic information for current and future students. The review team recognises this information as being clear and appropriate.

3.11   The review team concludes that the College's responsibility relating to expectations about information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

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 does not have an enhancement strategy, nor does enhancement of higher education provision feature in its stated strategic objectives. It does, however, have a higher education strategy that states the College aims to ensure 'the maintenance of quality and enhancement of provision'.

4.2 During its desk based review, the team read the key documents describing the College's understanding of and approach to enhancement. During the review visit the team spoke with senior managers and compared their comments with those of teaching and support staff.

4.3 The College meets the expectation, in that it does take deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities, but clear strategic articulation would promote a shared understanding of enhancement within a higher education context. Staff, from the Principal downwards, consider the term enhancement a recent development and are locally more comfortable with the term enrichment. Within this context staff consistently identify four areas: physical resources, administrative support, student services and the support of teaching. Such enrichment arises through College-wide strategies, but it is not articulated within a higher education context and so it does not integrate with the College's quality assurance processes.

4.4 The College regards its strategic decision to incorporate all higher education provision into the College review and monitoring process as an enhancement opportunity.

It believes that this system enables top-down strategic initiatives and bottom-up reviews to identify cross-curriculum issues. The College Senior Leadership Team includes the Director of Academic Quality and Development. Together with the incorporation of teacher training provision into the Quality and Development Unit under the newly-appointed Teaching and Learning Development Manager, there is a direct link between assurance and teaching. The review team formed the view that this link could be used to promote greater recognition and familiarity with the concept of enhancement. Nevertheless, the team noted a difference in the approaches to enhancement strategy as described by different groups of staff, and **recommends** that the College should further promote a shared understanding of enhancement across the College's higher education provision.

4.5 College investment in its facilities is resolving issues raised by the higher education students. For example, the redevelopment of the Ware site and upgrades to the Broxbourne site address specific issues for Creative Enterprise and Early Years students and Music students. The appointment of the Higher Education Development Manager and a Higher Education Administrator enables the College to provide some of the registry functions of larger institutions. As noted in Expectation B4, students regard the support for higher education students positively. Additionally, as noted in Expectation B3, the specific higher education focus of the College's team of ASTLPs also enhances its higher education provision.

4.6 The College meets the Expectation through its institution-wide strategies. A deeper awareness of enhancement and clearer articulation of a strategic approach to enhancement would lower the risk, which is currently moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.7   Although the College has no explicit enhancement strategy, it aims nevertheless to maintain and enhance the quality of its higher education provision. It does so through deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities, as regards provision of learning resources, and support for teachers, for student services and for administration.

4.8   The College has made significant investment in resources to support higher education provision, including the redevelopment of one of its campuses and upgrades to provision on its other campus. It has also established senior posts dedicated to supporting the management of higher education provision and has supported teachers in developing an higher education ethos to programme and module delivery.

4.9   The College's strategy makes no explicit link between quality assurance and enhancement of provision, and does not explicitly promote recognition of and familiarity with the concept of enhancement within the College. The review team accordingly **recommends** that the College should further promote a shared understanding of enhancement.

4.10   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College regards the development of employability as an intrinsic focus of its vocational education, as outlined in its strategic objectives. The focus starts from programme design with the inclusion of work-based learning modules that address employability; alternatively, in the case of the FdA Early years and Pearson programmes, the development of employability is embedded within the curriculum rather than within a distinct module. Each curriculum area is encouraged to develop its own approach to enhancing employability, through live projects, work-based learning and work experience. Practice varies across the subject areas, as commented on in Expectation B10.

5.2 The team explored the theme of student employability during its meetings with students, employers and teaching staff, and through an examination of programme specifications, live briefs, new programme outlines, employers' comments, external examiners' reports, Careers Service Annual Report 2013-14, and policy and procedure documentation. In doing so, the team saw evidence that the College was working towards its strategic goals of both preparing students for employment and providing educational services to meet the needs of employers, through the provision of professional and vocational programmes, employer engagement, and embedding employability skills into the curriculum.

5.3 The team noted that programmes supported the development of CV writing skills, offered placements, live briefs and work-related projects. The College employs fractional and hourly-paid teaching staff from a range of backgrounds including solicitors, accountants, artists and training consultants, who bring a current workplace context into their curriculum delivery.

5.4 The team heard from staff of numerous examples of employer engagement with the College. For instance, employers inform on programme development and formative assessment, attend final year poster presentations and periodic review, mentor students at work and provide witness statements.

5.5 The team noted positive feedback from the National Student Survey which showed students' appreciation of the opportunity of working on live briefs, of combining work-based learning with higher education, and of making key contacts with industry. Students who met the review team also commented on the value of their experiences and described how they were encouraged by their tutors to register with agencies to make contacts for auditions. They further described working on creating an identity as an artist or performer and creating pieces for exhibition.

5.6 The team spoke to two employers, the first of whom described the close working relationship with the Business Support Team to support internal progression for students in the College, and the second of whom provided an example of course teams using the theatre space for teaching and also work experience for small groups of students. Engagement with employers is further described in Expectation B10.

5.7 The College effectively integrates work-based learning or placement into its programme design, with the needs of employers considered at course validation. Foundation degrees are aligned with the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*. Although students clearly valued the experience of work-based learning, the experiences of different sets of students appeared variable and dependent on the nature of support at a programme level. The development across the programmes of a consistent approach to oversight and management of work-based learning has been already been highlighted as a recommendation (see Expectation B10).

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 27-29 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/about-us/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* (FQHEIS).

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.