



# Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

## Hertfordshire International College

April 2016

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education at Navitas Hertfordshire International College. The review took place from 6 to 7 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Alan Jago
- Professor Anne Peat.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Navitas UK Holdings Ltd at Hertfordshire International 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)<sup>1</sup> 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 (Embedded Colleges) 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 Navitas UK is taking or plans to take.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on Navitas UK's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

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 Navitas UK Hertfordshire International 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 2015-16 are Digital Literacy and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and Navitas UK 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.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859)

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Hertfordshire International College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Hertfordshire International College (HIC).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Navitas and HIC's degree-awarding body **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Hertfordshire International College.

- The continuity of staff involvement in the personal and academic development of students throughout their learning journey at HIC and University (Expectation B4).
- The work with the University in managing and supporting student transitions, which enables students to progress effectively (Expectation B4).
- The broad range of activities that recognise and use cultural difference in a particularly effective way to strengthen internationalisation (Expectation B4).
- The creation of an environment through a range of initiatives that fosters self-help and mutual support among students at all levels (Expectation B5).

### Theme: Digital Literacies

Navitas UK's Virtual Learning Strategy determines e-learning as a key element of the student experience. The virtual learning environment platform is the medium for learning resources and students see it as a valuable resource. The core Interactive Skills and Communication module includes aspects of digital literacy, including training in the use of plagiarism-detection software. There is some good practice in using digital technology but scope for further development in embedding digital literacies in the curriculum.

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

## About Hertfordshire International College

Hertfordshire International College (HIC), formerly Hertfordshire Institute of Business Technology, was the first Navitas UK college, established in collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire in 2000. HIC provides programmes at levels 3.4 and 6/7 of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and more than 4,500 students have studied with it since its inception. HIC's strategy is aligned with that of both Navitas and the University and takes into account the key elements of the Navitas Learning and Teaching Strategy.

The Recognition and Articulation Agreement has been renewed in 2005 and in 2011, when a new management structure and partnership governance arrangements were agreed. This provides for the Academic and Operational Advisory Committee (ADAC), chaired by the Key Account Manager for the University; the Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC), chaired by HIC and attended by the University's International Office and Key Account Manager; and the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMG) chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor

(International). Since the last QAA review in 2012 a new College Director has been appointed and, in line with other Navitas UK colleges, HIC has changed its immigration category to that of an 'embedded' college delivering 'integrated programmes'.

HIC's key challenge is the safeguarding of standards and the quality of learning opportunities and it has addressed these through, for instance, a regular meeting between the HIC Director and the University Director of Quality Assurance. The close working relationship between College staff and the link tutors and deans of the University ensures alignment of learning and teaching activities and the curriculum. The University regards HIC as a low-risk partner. Recent enhancements include an interactive online maths tool, plagiarism-detection software and open drop-in workshops in maths and English and physics.

The last QAA review made three recommendations. The first, relating to consistent application of procedures for programme approval, has been addressed by adherence to the requirements set out by Navitas and localised to fit the procedures of the University. New programmes require strategic approval from the JSPMG and Navitas UK and are validated through University systems. The second recommendation related to working with the partner University to provide students with formal recognition of modules passed and any appropriate exit award. A Certificate of Recognised Learning is planned to recognise modules passed and the award of a Certificate of Higher Education is available for eligible students. In order to meet the recommendation to develop a more consistent approach to student engagement, the College has established a College Enhancement Team that empowers students through their representatives to contribute to the quality-driven culture of HIC. The Student Forum and Learning and Teaching Board also encourage students to engage in quality assurance. HIC also carries out a student satisfaction survey, module evaluations and participates in the International Student Barometer survey.

## Explanation of the findings about Hertfordshire Internal 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

**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 HIC does not separately make awards, as HIC provision forms part of the educational offering of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate degree qualification at the appropriate FHEQ level. The University awards mark the achievement of the outcomes set out in the FHEQ qualification descriptors. The governance structures established between HIC and the partner University are the principal bodies responsible for the regulation, governance and quality assurance of the academic work of HIC. They approve recommendations for the introductions of programmes of study. Navitas UK has oversight of the standards of HIC provision through the programme approval process, receiving summaries of academic and operational committee reports and annual monitoring reports.

1.2 The process would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team tested the arrangements described in the self-evaluation document by considering documents including those produced during programme approval, annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports.

1.4 The review team concluded that the policies and procedures were implemented effectively. There was a clear process in place for the approval of programmes. Programme specifications refer to levels of the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and intended learning outcomes, which are informed by national guidance. External examiners confirm that the standards set are appropriate. Annual monitoring reports include reference to the appropriateness of aims, objectives and intended learning outcomes.

1.5 The consideration of documentation and discussions with staff confirmed that HIC employs qualification frameworks effectively in its published approval, review and assessment processes. The review team therefore confirms the assertions made by HIC and concludes that HIC meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk 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**

1.6 The quality assurance processes, policies and procedures are set by HIC in consultation with the University and documented in the Operations Manual for the Partnership. The University as the degree-awarding body ensures that the requirements of the FHEQ and threshold academic standards are met. The Director of Student Experience and Academic Quality Navitas UK ensure the Quality Code chapters are mapped to Navitas Policy and Procedures.

1.7 HIC does not make awards; the levels of study form part of the educational offering of the University and the University ensures the learning outcomes required for each level of study at HIC are clearly specified in the programme specification. Credits are used as a measure of study and assessment and achievement is demonstrated through a robust assessment process. HIC does not recognise prior learning for the purpose of exemption from a specified assessment.

1.8 The Navitas Policy Regulations (NPR) are localised to each College Policy Regulations (CPR) to ensure that they adhere to those of the Partner University, approval and review of new pathways. Strategic approval is required from the Joint Strategic Management Board (JSMB) and Navitas UK before pathway-specific documents are submitted to the appropriate School through the link tutor. The curriculum, including the learning outcomes and assessment, is designed involving academic staff from both HIC and the University. The new curriculum is reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel assembled by the Partner University.

1.9 Assessment decisions on the award of credit are reached through a process approved by the senior academic authority of the University. HIC operates a three-stage assessment process, Module Panel, Exam Board and Progression Board, which have delegated responsibility from the University.

1.10 This process would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.11 The team reviewed the Operations Manual and the membership and terms of reference of the Academic Development Committee (ADC), which has ultimate responsibility for quality and standards of programmes delivered by HIC and which reports to the University Academic Board. The review team also looked at HIC procedures and regulations and talked to staff and students to determine the assessment process, information and understanding of the regulations.

1.12 The evidence showed robust academic governance arrangements are in place with responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards vested in the senior academic authority with oversight by Navitas UK. Initiatives for new programmes comes from HIC or the University. A robust approval of programmes is in place, with the final decision to approve or re-approve a programme, or to confirm the award of a qualification to a student, resting with the University and with oversight by Navitas UK. The academic framework in which academic credit is awarded is consistent with the FHEQ and the credit obtained while studying at HIC is included on the student's transcript of achievement upon graduation. It is



clear in the Operational Manual that the Academic Board, via the Academic Development Committee, has ultimate responsibility for quality and standards of programmes.

1.13 The review team concludes that academic standards are systematically and consistently applied to ensure that academic standards are met and maintained. Credit is aligned to the appropriate level of the FHEQ. The Expectations is therefore met and the 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**

1.14 Academic standards are aligned to the appropriate level of the FHEQ in agreement with the University. Credit is used as a measure of study and assessment in line with the FHEQ. HIC does not make awards; HIC provision is part of the educational offering of the University undergraduate and postgraduate degree qualifications.

1.15 Details of all College programmes are stored in the student information system, MAZE and details are transferred onto the University System, providing details for the students transcript.

1.16 The University marks the achievement of the outcomes set in the qualification descriptors, clearly articulating the learning outcomes required for each level of study as per the definitive module document (DMD) and programme specification. Details with regard to the storing of HIC programmes are found in Navitas Introduction to IT. A new system, NAVIGATE, will replace MAZE. It is due to be introduced in autumn 2016 and is currently being piloted in Australia.

1.17 The review team concluded that the processes would enabled the Expectation to be met.

1.18 To test the design in practice, the review team looked at the programme specifications, DMDs, qualifications and intended learning outcomes, the access and availability of the Portal for key stakeholders and the links from the Student College Handbooks. The team talked to Staff and Student representatives.

1.19 The evidence demonstrated that the programme specifications and learning outcomes are consistent with the FHEQ and are reviewed during annual monitoring which involves the University. Students are provided with the appropriate programme specification on registration, due notice being given of any subsequent changes. Students met by the review team confirmed information about programmes is available on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Students confirm the information provided with regards to programmes is clear and easy to access. An introductory event demonstrating the Portal is timetabled for the beginning of each module and they feel well prepared.

1.20 The review team concludes that a definitive record of each programme and its learning outcomes is maintained and that the Expectation is met, with a low degree of risk.

**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**

1.21 Academic standards for all HIC's provision are set by its partner University, through its formal programme approval process, as the degree-awarding body. Such approval requires that the provision meets the requirements of the University's regulations and its academic framework. Any changes to programmes have to be formally approved to ensure that these standards will continue to be met. The approval of new programmes and changes to existing programmes involve HIC, the University and Navitas UK.

1.22 The review team found that HIC has processes in place for the design and approval of modules and programmes, which ensure that academic standards are set at the appropriate level meeting UK threshold standards. The design would therefore meet the Expectation.

1.23 The review team tested the effectiveness of HIC's procedures for programme approval by examining policy documents and manuals, documentation for programme approval and amendment.

1.24 The review team found that the policies and procedures for programme approval and change are effectively implemented. They incorporate the academic regulations of the University and UK threshold standards. All modules have a definitive module document (DMD) which detail all learning outcomes and assessment requirements. Staff use standard templates for DMDs and programme information.

1.25 The review team concluded that HIC, with the support of its University and Navitas UK, operates programme approval procedures that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meet UK threshold standards and are in accordance with the relevant academic frameworks and regulations. Overall the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated 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**

1.26 HIC provision forms part of the educational offering of the University, which awards credit on achievement of outcomes set out in the FHEQ qualification descriptors.

1.27 Programme specifications are used as the definitive reference point for all publically available information on the aims, learning outcomes and expected learner achievements of programmes of study. These are a source of information for students, staff, members of the University who act as externals, and as a reference point for annual monitoring.

1.28 Programme learning outcomes and their assessment are designed and agreed as part of the programme approval process. Learning outcomes are assessed and aligned with the relevant FHEQ qualification descriptor and level 3 equivalent related to the programme aims and Subject Benchmark Statements. Consistency with the University programmes is also taken into account.

1.29 Learning outcomes and assessments are detailed in the programme specifications and the DMDs. The DMD sets out learning outcomes to be assessed at module level, and indicates the assessment method, including weighting, to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. The programme specifications demonstrate what constitutes threshold standards and ensures parity of standards across the disciplines. Credits are used as a measure of study and assessment. The assessments demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes and the different types of assessment helps prepare students for transition to the University.

1.30 Assessment decisions on the award of credit are reached through a process approved by the Senior Academic authority of the University. The process for the scrutiny of marks awarded by HIC is covered by the partnership arrangements with the University. Navitas UK has published a Guide to External Examining and appoint the external for ILSC Module, whilst the University appoints external examiners for level 4 programmes and pre Masters programme.

1.31 HIC operates a three-stage assessment process: Module Panels, Exam Boards and Progression Boards. The marks/grades awarded while studying at HIC are recorded on the student's transcript, providing students with a full record of achievement upon graduation.

1.32 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.33 The review team tested the process by looking at a range of written evidence including procedures, committee terms of reference and student outcome reports. There was also discussion with staff and students about the information available.

1.34 The evidence shows that staff are aware of the assessment process and the University Link Tutor and subject specialist provide the externality and internally moderate assessed work to ensure a consistent approach, which maintains academic standards across the discipline.

1.35 Student representatives who met the review team confirmed they are aware of the assessment guidelines and marking criteria included in the programme specifications, the DMDs and the module guide, which is a more student friendly version of the DMD. Assessment regulations are systematically and consistently applied to secure academic standards and students are aware of the regulations. Staff and students have access to external examiner reports through the VLE.

1.36 The assessment process including the use of internal and external externals and the governance arrangements through Module Panels, Exam Boards and Progression Boards was confirmed by staff who met the review team. It is clear that University academics routinely consider whether the academic standards and achievements of students of HIC students are comparable with those of the wider student body at the University.

1.37 The review team concludes that appropriate assessment is used to judge student performance against the standards set, providing students with an opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the Learning Outcomes. The degree-awarding body is involved at all levels from the approval process, ongoing monitoring and assessment in a consistent and systematic manner. The University has ultimate responsibility for the award of academic credit. Therefore the Expectation is met, with a low degree of risk

**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**

1.38 HIC monitors its programmes to ensure that UK threshold academic standards are being achieved and that academic standards are being maintained. This is achieved by consideration of Academic and Operational Advisory Committee (AOAC) reports, annual monitoring and periodic review. Responsibility for the standards of programmes offered at HIC is through the partner University's Academic Board via the Academic Development Committee (ADC). ADC receives regular reports from the Joint Strategic Management Board of HIC.

1.39 The review team found that the policies and processes in place for programme monitoring and review are designed to see that UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of the awarding body are being maintained. The design would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.40 In order to assess the effectiveness of HIC's procedures for programme monitoring and review the review team looked at policy documents, manuals, committee minutes, external examiner reports, and annual monitoring reports.

1.41 The review team found that the policies and procedures in place for programme monitoring and review are implemented effectively and demonstrate that UK threshold standards are achieved and that the academic standards of the University are maintained. HIC regularly reports to Navitas UK in its annual monitoring on a number of key indicators including student performance, progression, pass rates, retention and completion. Statistical data on student performance is analysed in the annual monitoring and evaluation report (AMER) for each programme. The report also contains a commentary on learning outcomes and there is reference to student feedback. External examiners are asked to comment on the standards of assessment, the achievement of learning outcomes and the relevance of the curriculum. University link tutors keep a close eye on the programmes delivered in order to make sure that agreed content is being delivered and that the correct processes are being followed. They report regularly to the AOAC on these matters.

1.42 The review team concluded that HIC, with the support of Navitas UK and the University, operates effective monitoring and review processes that demonstrate whether UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards are maintained. Overall the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated 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**

1.43 The University at institutional approval satisfies itself that a partner is a suitable body to deliver higher education programmes leading to an award of the University; this is reviewed at re-approval. The approval of new programmes is normally for six years but it may be shorter if deemed appropriate by University Senate.

1.44 Guidance on programme design emphasises consistency with external reference points. The approval process ensures that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standards and are aligned with external reference points; this is achieved through the use of external scrutiny and expert academic advice.

1.45 The Recognition and Articulation Agreement clearly states that the University acts as the external and pays a key role in HIC core quality assurance processes responsible for setting and maintaining academic standards. The subject discipline staff from the University moderate the work at Level 4. The University academic is specifically requested to confirm that they are satisfied with the threshold standards set by HIC, to ensure that they are at the appropriate level and are in accordance with FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, and whether the academic standards and achievements of students are comparable with others at the same level. Module panels and boards of examiners include the relevant link tutor and subject specialist from the University.

1.46 External examiners are appointed to the standard delivered Level 4 module programmes by the University. Navitas UK appoints the external examiner for the Interactive Learning Skills and Communication module (ILSC) and detailed guidelines have been developed by Navitas on the role of external examiner.

1.47 All programmes are subject to annual monitoring and evaluation, which includes feedback from link tutors and subject specialist moderators; the reviews are considered by HIC through its governance committee structure. The relevant associate dean reviews the reports and raise any concerns with the appropriate senior manager of HIC. The University conducts periodic reviews every six years and the review panel consists of at least two external panel members who are subject specialists.

1.48 The process design would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.49 The review team tested the process by looking at the relevant process documentation and the Articulation Agreement for details of externality. The team also discussed with staff the role of the link tutor and subject specialist in providing advice and support to HIC.

1.50 The evidence shows that external expertise is used at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards. The University link tutors and subject specialists have a significant role in providing externality to HIC on a regular basis, with outside subject

specialists being commissioned for key events such as programme approval and periodic reviews. There is evidence of link tutors having input to the Annual monitoring reports. The team noted that the link tutor and subject specialists are members of the Examination Board and external examiner reports are available for staff and students on the VLE. The staff whom the review team met explained how externals are involved at each level of the process, including development, approval, annual monitoring, periodic review and assessment.

1.51 Navitas UK has commissioned external consultants to review the operation of the network's college partnerships and staff are actively contributing to the process.

1.52 The review team concludes that there is independent expertise obtained at key stages of the process of setting and maintaining academic standards and the team noted HIC and the University's commitment to maintaining standards through benchmarking of external reference points and involvement of external subject specialists. Therefore the Expectation is met, with a low level of risk.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



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

1.53 In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.54 Processes are in place to ensure that qualifications are positioned at the appropriate level of the FHEQ and level 3 equivalent and that learning outcomes align with the qualification descriptors and take account of Subject Benchmark Statements. There are appropriate and transparent frameworks and regulations in place and these are adhered to in practice. Definitive programme records are maintained and following approval and any subsequent changes agreed in accordance with due processes. Design and approval process involving Navitas UK and the awarding body are robust. Credit is achieved only when learning outcomes are met by students, as attested by moderators and external examiners, and programme reviews also confirm this alignment. External and independent expertise is employed at key stages to ensure the appropriate setting and maintenance of academic standards.

1.55 All seven Expectations are met, with low risk. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice in this area. HIC is meeting its obligations in relation to the requirements of Navitas and the University to safeguard standards. The review team therefore concludes that the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards **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 HIC works with its partner University within the overall framework set down by Navitas UK. All the processes and procedures involved in programme design and approval are outlined in the Operations Manual. Any proposal for a new programme from HIC has to be signed off by Navitas UK before it goes to the University for initial approval. There is a close working relationship between the University and HIC in developing any new programme. The approval and validation processes follow those of the University, outlined in its Quality Assurance Handbook. Final approval for HIC programmes must also be given by Navitas UK. Programmes are subject to University periodic review. There are clear processes in place for making changes to programmes between review periods. Minor changes may be approved by the relevant University School; major changes must be approved by the University Academic Development Committee and would normally require bringing forward the periodic review.

2.2 The review team found that HIC has appropriate policies and procedures in place for programme design and approval in order to meet the relevant expectation of the Quality Code, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 In order to test the effectiveness of HIC's procedures, the review team examined policy documents and the Operations Manual. They read appropriate committee minutes, examined documents associated with developing new modules and new programmes and met staff involved in programme design and approval.

2.4 All the documents seen by the review team showed that HIC implements Navitas UK's and the University's policies and procedures for the design, approval and change of programmes effectively. Proposed new programmes are discussed at AOAC and are recorded in the HIC Action Plan.

2.5 The review team concludes that HIC, with Navitas UK and the University, operates effective processes for the design, approval and change of programmes. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of associated risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**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 HIC's admissions policy is approved by the University and is articulated in Navitas UK's policies and procedures for selection and admission. The policies are regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with UK visa regulations. HIC Admissions policy provides details of the process, and ensures HIC adheres to the principles of fair admission. Included is the policy for handling appeals and complaints about recruitment, selection and admission decisions.

2.7 Navitas UK's Director of Corporate Services has oversight of compliance with Tier 4, along with the Head of Compliant Systems and Services. HIC's Director/Principal manages the recruitment, selection and admission within the requirement of UKVI, Tier 4 sponsor guidance, UK immigration rules and the Quality Code. They also fulfil the conditions required by Navitas UK, as documented in HIC's Operations Manual.

2.8 The training of agents is conducted by Navitas UK's College Marketing Team, which also maintains a database. HIC uses the Navitas UK Agent Manual 2014-15 and agents and staff involved in admissions have to abide by the Code of Ethics. Details of agents used by Navitas UK are reported to the University International Office and recorded on the student record system. Staff involved in recruitment and selection receive updates through monthly meetings of College staff, the University International Office and HIC Learning and Teaching Board.

2.9 Navitas UK and HIC do not accept prior qualifications and learning. There may, however, be some exceptions who are referred to as non-standard applicants and who are referred to the Academic Board. The English Language entry requirements are agreed with the University annually. A five-year plan is in place for programmes and target numbers are discussed at the JSMB and monitored monthly by the University International Officer.

2.10 The University International Office supports HIC's operations in respect of UKVI compliance and professional development of relevant staff. All marketing material is approved by the University International Office prior to publication, with entry criteria published on HIC Website and in HIC International Student Guide. The qualifications required for each pathway are approved as part of the formal approval process and are set out in the relevant Pathway Operations Document. Students wishing to study on a College pathway apply directly to HIC. Should authenticity checks be required on an applicant, a credibility interview is carried out and a comprehensive application verification process for checking qualifications, including English language, has been introduced across HIC network. HIC and University review on an annual basis potential high risk regions and markets; visa rejection data forms the basis of this review.

2.11 Navitas UK wishes to increase the number of home and EU students, but this is not a strategic focus for the University as it has its own widening participation arrangements with local colleges.

2.12 The design of the process indicates that the Expectation would be met.

2.13 In order to test the processes, the review team looked at HIC Policies and Regulations (CPRs) governing the admissions process and talked to staff and students about the application of the policy.

2.14 The evidence confirms that the admission process is straightforward and the criteria properly highlighted and transparent, with clear English language requirements based on those of the University. HIC provides equitable treatment of a diverse group of prospective students and College staff, and agents are appropriately trained for the role. Students met by the review team confirm the information provided is easy to understand and follow. They are also aware of the procedure for handling appeals and complaints about recruitment, selection and admissions.

2.15 There is evidence of HIC and the University working together to operate a robust process for recruitment selection and admission. Local responsibility lies with the HIC Director/Principal and Navitas UK has oversight of the process. The review team concludes that the 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. 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**

2.16 HIC's approach to effective learning and teaching is set out in the Navitas UK Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan and is informed by Navitas UK's policy frameworks and the requirements of its partner University. The Strategic Plan sets out the broad aims and objectives and HIC produces action plans and an annual report setting out actions taken in relation to identified strategic objectives. Each semester reports are made to the Academic and Operational Advisory Committee (AOAC) to report performance in meeting agreed goals. HIC Learning and Teaching Board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the learning and teaching objectives. The responsibilities of HIC and the University in relation to learning resources, staffing, and programme delivery are set out in the HIC Operations Manual.

2.17 The review team found that HIC has appropriate policies and processes in place in relation to learning and teaching in order to meet the relevant expectation of the Quality Code, which would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.18 In order to test the effectiveness of HIC's policies and procedures the review team examined policy documents and supporting action plans. It also looked at committee minutes, items related to teaching staff including teaching observation, and the Student Charter. The review team met with staff and students to discuss matters related to teaching and learning.

2.19 HIC is responsible for the appointment of staff teaching on its programmes, and recruits staff in accordance with Navitas UK policies and procedures. New teaching staff have to be approved by the University, the link tutor usually undertaking this role. Staff are subject to both management and peer observation of teaching and have access to University resources and staff development opportunities. Such opportunities are also offered by HIC and by Navitas UK.

2.20 Students whom the review team met are positive about the teaching and the level of support they receive. They confirmed that they receive timely and helpful feedback on their work. They also commented that all the staff are approachable and offer extra support whenever it is necessary. Additional sessions are organised for students needing particular teaching support.

2.21 Students have access to learning resources both at HIC and in the University. Students who met the review team said that they find the learning resources available to them, including the library, computing and laboratory facilities and the VLE, appropriate to all their needs. There is a Student Handbook and all teaching material and necessary information about their programme, HIC and the University is available online.

2.22 HIC has a Student Charter, which sets out the expectations and obligations of both HIC and its students. It collects feedback on teaching through a student survey each semester for each module, and also through matters raised by students at the Student Forum, and at the Teaching and Learning Board.

2.23 The review team concludes that HIC, in conjunction with Navitas UK and the University, works effectively with its staff and students to review and improve the provision of learning opportunities that enable independent learning, depth of study and critical thinking. Overall the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated 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**

2.24 HIC works within the framework set by Navitas for supporting student development. It has a strong commitment to enabling students to develop their academic and personal potential, a central objective of HIC Strategy. There is a clear structure in place to provide support services, led by the Director of College Services and academic services, led by the Manager Academic Services. In addition, students have access to specialist services in the University. The quality of the student experience is seen as key from first contact to graduation.

2.25 The review team found that HIC has appropriate policies and processes in place to monitor and evaluate the services and resources needed to enable students to develop their potential. The design would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.26 In order to test the effectiveness of the design, the review team looked at policies and procedures, committee minutes and handbooks. The review team also discussed the availability of academic and support services and the development of skills for higher education with staff and students.

2.27 The review team concluded that HIC provides a range of effective services that enable students to develop their academic and personal potential. Once on the programme the quality of student experience is seen as central; this is achieved by adopting and embedding a number of key principles in delivering and supporting its programmes. A key element of the way in which students are supported is by the provision of a 'core' comprehensive learning skills acquisition module, the Interactive Learning Skills and Communication module (ILSC). The provision of this module prepares students for successful transition to University study.

2.28 To ensure the appropriate level of student support is provided the staff continually monitor each student's academic performance and overall experience during their time in HIC. Students who are underperforming are placed in the 'Students in Jeopardy' programme and receive targeted additional support. Students are taught in small groups to facilitate the acquisition of module learning outcomes. They receive additional support through tutorial group work. Students whom the review team met were very positive about the way that HIC enabled them to develop and achieve and how its staff continued to be a resource to them throughout their studies at the University. The continuity of staff involvement in the personal and academic development of students throughout their learning journey at HIC and university is **good practice**.

2.29 There is a clear focus by HIC on building effective transition processes from its Navitas programmes into its University degrees. A number of different tactics are used to achieve this objective. Key to many of these is the close relationship between HIC staff and the University staff. These include participating in University classes, using University laboratories and being involved with the University Students' Union. The work with the University in managing and supporting student transitions which enable students to progress effectively is **good practice**.

2.30 Information about student services is provided in student handbooks and is available online through the VLE. HIC has organised a comprehensive and regular series of

social, cultural and sporting activities to encourage and enable student interaction. The students whom the review team met were very appreciative of these activities and commented on the effectiveness of the programme. In particular, the broad range of activities, which recognise and use cultural difference in a particularly effective way to strengthen internationalisation, is **good practice**.

2.31 The review team concludes that HIC, with Navitas UK and the University, operates effectively to enable students to develop their academic and personal potential. Overall the review team concludes the Expectation 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**

2.32 HIC works within the framework for student engagement set out by Navitas UK which is embedded in the Operations Manual. There are elected student representatives who sit on a number of College committees, including HIC Teaching and Learning Board, HIC Enhancement Team and the Student Forum. All students are eligible to attend the Student Forum which meets once each semester. There is also a 'Student Voice' system whereby each class student representative collects any issue particular to their class.

2.33 Students are surveyed regularly, and complete module and course evaluations. The results of these surveys are used in annual monitoring and are sent to relevant service areas for action.

2.34 The review team found that HIC has appropriate policies and processes in place for student engagement, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.35 In order to test the effectiveness of HIC's policies and procedures the review team looked at relevant policies and supporting documentation, and committee minutes. The review team discussed student engagement with both staff and students.

2.36 The review team concluded that HIC provides numerous opportunities for student engagement that are effective in allowing the student voice to be heard at all levels. The review team also concluded that HIC responds effectively to student views and makes sure that students are made aware of the value of their contribution.

2.37 Student representatives receive training from the Manager of Academic Services. Students who met the review team said that they are able to make their voice heard at the committees on which they sit, and that College staff listen to their views and take appropriate actions whenever possible. Staff and students who met the review team gave examples of changes that had happened as a result from student comment either at meetings or through student surveys. The review team noted examples in committee minutes of issues raised by students being discussed and action taken as a result.

2.38 The review team noted the examples of interaction between staff and students, and between students, which resulted in the strong engagement of students in their courses and in wider support activities. These include the development of clubs, the learning by students of each other's languages and cultures, the use of social media applications and the initiative by pre-master's students to form a social networking group to advise each other on a self-help basis in-order to understand the requirements of western education. The strength of the student engagement at HIC is exemplified by the creation of an environment through a range of initiatives which fosters self-help and mutual support among students at all levels, and which is **good practice**.

2.39 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, with a low degree of risk.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**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**

2.40 HIC Policies and Regulations govern the assessment of students and are included in the Operations Manual. HIC assessment regulations are part of the University's programme approval processes, and the volume, timing and nature of the assessment are considered at these events. HIC regulations are benchmarked against University regulations to ensure as far as possible that they provide appropriate preparation for students once they progress to the University pathway stage.

2.41 Under the standard delivery model assessments are undertaken by HIC and moderated by the subject specialist from the appropriate School of the University. Under the integrated delivery module assessment, moderation and external examining are carried out by the relevant School of the University. The University appoints the external examiner to the programme and their involvement is agreed jointly by HIC and the University. Navitas UK appoints an external examiner for the ILSC module.

2.42 HIC does not recognize prior learning. A variety of different forms of assessment are used to prepare students for progression to the next stage of the University pathway. Students are prepared for academic writing through the ILSC module, which aims to develop good academic practice and to prepare students for UK higher education studies and the next stage of the university pathway. A Plagiarism and Collusion Policy and Procedure is available through the Portal and HIC Plagiarism Guideline defines plagiarism and other forms of poor academic practice. Plagiarism-detection software is used on the majority of programmes and staff are updated on how to use this. The policy clearly indicates the process for the reporting of students and the possible outcomes. HIC and the University use a similar procedure.

2.43 A number of approaches are used to ensure students receive effective, timely, personalised feedback. Feedback on course work assignments is within 10 days, in some cases much quicker; feedback on examinations is general class feedback, though individual feedback is available on request. The University undertakes to provide feedback within four weeks. These different approaches are made clear to students. Triannual teaching and learning workshops prepare staff involved in the assessment of student work and include sessions on assessment and feedback.

2.44 Mitigating circumstances are covered in the HIC Student Handbook, available through the Portal. Details of extenuating circumstances are in the Student Handbook.

2.45 HIC operates a two-stage system of examination boards: Module Panels and Progressions Boards. The Module Panel oversees the assessment of modules and confirms marks in accordance with the regulations set out in the CPRs agreed by the University. The Progression Board receives all module results for students and makes a decision on progression to the next Stage of the Pathway. The membership and terms of reference of these Boards are set out in College Policies and Regulations and includes the relevant University link tutor or subject specialist. The staff of HIC, like staff of the appropriate

University School, attend the examination board. Progression requirements are clear in the Programme Specifications and DMDs.

2.46 HIC provides the University with detail of students' module results and progression decisions to enable students to enrol on the appropriate University programme and for a detailed student record to be created. A matrix of progression details is included in the Learning and Teaching Report, produced annually and submitted to Navitas UK.

2.47 The assessment strategy is considered an important part of the programme design, with methods and timing considered during the approval process. Reference points are The Good Practice Guide to Assessment and Feedback, created by Navitas UK, CPR QS9 and Quality Code *Chapter B6*. Benchmarking of assessments is through external academic scrutiny at programme approval, annual monitoring and external examiner feedback. There is further externality at Periodic Review, conducted by the University every six years.

2.48 The assessment process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.49 The review team checked the application of the process by considering a range of relevant documentary evidence, such as DMDs and programme specifications and reviewed the assessment methods to ensure all learning outcomes were assessed. The review team met staff of HIC and University, and students.

2.50 Students are prepared to use plagiarism detection software during ILSC module. There is a clear process in place for dealing with students who have more than an appropriate level of similarity; it is intended to help students understand referencing. Correct referencing is considered key to achieving good assessment results, being a clear component of the ILSC module and reiterated at the beginning of each module.

2.51 Students met by the review team were aware of the different assessment methods including the marking criteria. They acknowledged the importance of experiencing a variety of methods of assessment in preparation for future study and feel that it adequately prepares them for progression onto the University pathway. HIC ensures students understand how assessment judgments are made through dialogue during tutorials and class feedback. Students described the feedback as being very effective. They are aware of the process for submitting mitigating circumstances, how to appeal against a decision, and opportunities for reassessment or module retake.

2.52 The team concludes that equitable, valid and reliable assessment processes are in place, enabling every student to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes for the credit of the qualification being sought. The information provided for staff and students is accessible and easy to understand and staff and students are adequately prepared. Therefore the Expectation is met, with a low degree of risk.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.53 The degree-awarding body is responsible for assessment, moderation and external examining the integrated delivery modules; this is carried out by the relevant School of the University. For the standard delivery model assessments are undertaken by HIC and moderation is undertaken by the University subject specialist; this is clearly set out in the HIC Policy and Regulation, allowing the Expectation of *Chapter B7* of the Quality Code to be met. The link tutor acts as a conduit to provide the link between the University and HIC. At Level 4 the University, through the subject specialist, moderates assessed work. External examiners appointed by Navitas UK moderate the ILSC module. The University does not normally have an external examiner for Level 4 modules.

2.54 Navitas UK has recently issued guidance on the Role of External Examiners to ensure understanding of the expectations of the Quality Code *Chapter B7*.

2.55 The arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.56 In order to test the application and consistency of these arrangements, the review team looked at a range of documentation including the Articulation Agreement, CPRs, Operational Handbook, Navitas UK External Examiner Guidance, external examiner reports, the VLE and Programme Annual Reports. The application of the CPRs was discussed with staff and students.

2.57 The evidence shows that clear external examiner guidance, policies and regulations are in place. External examiners provide informative comments and recommendations. An example from the external examiners' annual reports shows that the external examiner was provided with the programme specification prior to commencement and agreed that the programme offered a balanced curriculum and was appropriate for progression to the master's programme. The examiner confirmed that the course work and exam marks were consistent and feedback was good and that the Board of Examiners and Module Board were well attended and there was good discussion. An example of a moderator's report confirmed the content of the exam was consistent with the previous exam and comparable with papers sat at the University and that the content and syllabus covered is comparable with course descriptors.

2.58 The staff and students confirm external examiner reports are made available through the VLE. The reports are fit for purpose, although a common external examiner template might help ensure consistency across the provision.

2.59 The review team found that the College-University partnership makes appropriate use of externality on College Level 4 programmes, where the University does not normally require external examiner oversight through the link tutor and subject specialist as per the Articulation Agreement. However, to ensure sufficient independent externality HIC and the University might consider identifying the duration of the link tutor or subject specialist appointments. Nonetheless, the review team considers the Expectation to be met, with low risk.

**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**

2.60 HIC works with the University within an overall framework provided by Navitas UK. Annual monitoring reports are produced for each programme using a standard template. They are submitted to HIC Learning and Teaching Board, and when approved by that Board they are sent to the University's Collaborative Partnership Unit and in turn to the University's Schools for comment. They are then sent to the Academic Development Committee (ADC), which involves both HIC and University staff. Copies of the reports are also sent to Navitas UK.

2.61 Periodic review of HIC's provision is undertaken using University procedures. These procedures involve a panel appointed by the University, which makes recommendations to ADC. Any outcomes from periodic review are incorporated in HIC Action Plan.

2.62 The review team found that HIC has appropriate policies and processes in place for the monitoring and review of its programmes, in order to maintain standards and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The Expectation would be met.

2.63 In order to test the effectiveness of HIC's procedures the review team examined policy documents; looked at monitoring and review reports and consequent action plans; examined committee minutes; and met staff responsible for annual monitoring and review.

2.64 The evidence seen by the review team showed that HIC implements both Navitas UK and the University's policies and procedures for the monitoring and periodic review of programmes effectively. Annual monitoring reports include data on student numbers and progression, student feedback, a link tutor's report and commentary on the implementation of the previous year's action plan.

2.65 Periodic review of HIC provision is carried out on a rolling programme every six years for each approved programme, following the University's processes.

2.66 The review team concludes that HIC, in conjunction with the University, operates effective processes for the monitoring and review of its provision. Overall, the review team concludes the Expectation is met and that the associated level of 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**

2.67 HIC instructions on handling of complaints and appeals is contained within the Operations Manual and College Policies and Regulations, which students and staff can access via the VLE. The Complaints and Appeals process was revised in 2013 and localised to suit the partnership.

2.68 Appeals can be made against completion of part of the programme, progression to the next stage and entitlement of award. Appeal is generally made on an informal basis but records are maintained. Students studying on a College pathway have the right to appeal against the outcome of an assessment on the grounds of extenuating circumstances affecting their performance, or a material irregularity in the assessment. The procedures and application form are set out in the policy.

2.69 Students are only subject to University procedures for appeals once they are studying on a University Stage of a Pathway.

2.70 Students are subject to HIC complaints procedures for issues relating to their experience at HIC. A register is maintained and appropriate record of all complaints received. Complaints are normally handled by the Academic Manager. A mediation meeting may follow this. If the situation escalates then the HIC Director/Principal is asked to intervene and report back to HIC Learning and Teaching Board. Complaints which are not resolved may be taken forward by the Quality and Standards Office. HIC Learning and Teaching Board are informed of complaints with immediate effect. A flow chart demonstrates the process and timescales for actions.

2.71 Students may complain directly to the University, through the University's Complaints Procedure, if the complaint is about issues relating directly to the University. College students may complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) if they remain dissatisfied having exhausted the University's complaints procedure.

2.72 The review team found that the procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.73 In testing the operation of the procedure, the review team looked at the consistency of the Operations Manual, CPRs, Student Handbook and the VLE and sought clarification of the process through talking to staff and students.

2.74 The evidence shows that clear processes are in place for handling student complaints and appeals, and staff and students are aware of the process. Students feel empowered through the Student Voice process and their confidence in raising questions reduces the need for making a complaint. Students whom the review team met were aware of the process for submitting a complaint, although an example was given of a formal complaint being made when it could have been quickly dealt with informally, and information might be clearer about what warrants an informal and formal complaint. The evidence shows that very few complaints are made, as the majority of issues are dealt with informally.

2.75 The review team therefore concludes that the process for making a complaint or appeal is clear and easy to access, transparent and fair. Although the majority of complaints and appeals are handled informally there is a clear pathway should escalation be required.

A log of Complaints and Appeals is maintained and included in the annual report. The Expectation is met, with low risk.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.76 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.77 Of the nine applicable expectations in this area, all are met, with low risk and no recommendations or affirmations.

2.78 The review team has identified four features of good practice relating to the way in which students are enabled to develop and achieve and to the steps taken to engage students as partners in their learning.

2.79 There is also evidence of HIC's commitment to the continuous enhancement of student learning opportunities, together with a clear focus on managing student needs and a widespread engagement of students which is supported.

2.80 The review team therefore concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.



### **3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities**

**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 HIC uses a range of media for publishing information. Navitas UK has a centralised design department based in Australia, which assists with the marketing design and communication and the close working relationship with the deans and senior post holders of the University, together with appropriate administrative departments, creates a coordinated approach to marketing and published information. All material is jointly branded. The University in advance of publication signs off HIC material and Navitas UK has oversight of all published material.

3.2 HIC's Director of Marketing and Admissions manages HIC's published material, subject to approval of the University's international marketing teams under the leadership of the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor. Changes are updated in the document section of the Portal and handbook annually. The Marketing and Admissions Committee receives regular reports on all aspects of HIC's marketing activity.

3.3 The principle vehicle for information about HIC's offer, including programme, entry criteria, fees and how to apply, is found on HIC's Website and is available to prospective students and the wider public. Information for prospective students is communicated in a number of different ways: printed material, online information, recruitment fairs, virtual presentation and social media. Agents trained by Navitas are also a good source of information and the process of application is found on HIC's website.

3.4 Programme information, programme specifications, DMDs and module guides are available for staff and students on the VLE. HIC is quick to communicate any changes. Every semester the Student Handbook is updated and uploaded on the document section of the student Portal; it contains all the policies that affect students studying at HIC. New students attend an induction during which information is provided through a set of workshops, which includes health and safety, student Portal induction and campus tour.

3.5 On completion of the programme College students receive a confirmation of attainment from HIC detailing their achievements. Once the student graduates from the University the credits for the first year of the degree studied at HIC are recognised on the University transcript.

3.6 The design of the process suggests that the Expectation would be met.

3.7 The review team tested the process by reviewing online information, printed material, the Student Handbook, College Policies and Regulations. They also looked at programme specifications and DMDs available via the VLE. Discussion with staff and students also took place regarding ease of access, accuracy and usefulness of the information.

3.8 There is evidence of a sound strong relationship between HIC and University and evidence of good partnership working with regard to published information. The College Services Director of HIC and the University independently monitor the published material.

3.9 Students confirm that the process for application and admission is published on the website, that there is no difficulty accessing it, and that it is clear and easy to understand. There are useful links and well laid out pages, and HIC is quick to communicate any changes. The evidence demonstrates that changes to admissions requirements are reviewed at the appropriate University committee and reflected in the new brochure.

3.10 College academic regulations, policies and procedures are included in the Operations Manual and also published on the website. A guidebook has been produced so that all policies and manuals are in the same place and are easily accessible to staff. A Sessional Handbook is also provided for new lecturers, which requires a signed acknowledgement that they have read and understood the information.

3.11 The VLE demonstration provided for the review team confirmed that all relevant programme information is available for staff and students. It is easily accessible and updated regularly. Students confirm during the induction that they are taught how to use the HIC VLE, which they find easy to navigate. They are also given access to the University VLE and have no difficulty in using both systems.

3.12 The review team concludes that information provided for prospective students, current students and staff is clear, easy to understand and accessible. It is updated regularly and a robust system is in place for checking the accuracy of information, demonstrating a good working relationship between HIC and the University, with Navitas UK having oversight of all published material. Therefore the Expectation is met, with low risk.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.13 In reaching its judgement about the quality of information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.14 The Expectation is met, with low risk, and there are no recommendations or affirmations. The information provided by HIC for all its intended audiences, including prospective students, current students and alumni, and for quality assurance purposes, is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.15 The review team therefore concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 **Commentary: The 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 HIC has developed its approach to enhancement within the framework set out by Navitas UK. HIC is party to the strategic aims of Navitas UK and is committed to continuous improvement and enhancement. It has implemented the structural framework for enhancement, which includes the establishment of a College Enhancement Team (CET) reporting to HIC Learning and Teaching Committee.

4.2 HIC has developed a series of objectives that seek to enhance the student experience. These are outlined as a set of actions in the Strategic Plan and a more detailed list of action points following discussions at HIC Enhancement Team (CET). These are reviewed at each meeting of the CET and updates recorded. Current actions focus on student support, marketing activities and learning about diverse cultural backgrounds.

4.3 HIC aims to make sure that there is continuous improvement to the students' learning opportunities and the student experience with consequent sharing of good practice. This is achieved by using a number of mechanisms including student feedback, link tutor feedback, external examiner feedback and annual monitoring. This is set in the context of the overall Navitas UK Learning and Teaching Strategy, which includes a number of strategic indicators with related objectives to be achieved over the period of the strategy.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacies

### Findings

5.1 Digital Literacy Strategy is part of Navitas UK's enhancement framework. The Virtual Learning Strategy 2015-16 applies to the UK College community who use the VLE and is a key element of the Navitas UK Student Experience framework. The strategy is to ensure all College students can access appropriate material to support their studies; encourage and support College staff to take an active role in student learning; promote staff development; ensure the tools are appropriate to support student learning; and ensure appropriate training is provided for staff and students. The strategy makes clear the need to ensure digital literacy is embedded in the curriculum and that appropriate resources are available.

5.2 All lecturers and students have access to the VLE, allowing access to coursework and discussion forums; this is the medium that contains all learning and teaching resources. A VLE Guide is available to provide staff with guidance on content. Students consider the VLE to be an important component of course delivery, with lecture notes/presentations uploaded before or after the lecture, and see this as a useful source of information.

5.3 The Student Satisfaction Survey shows that over 90 per cent of students are happy with the learning support and information provided on the student Portal and VLE. They are also happy using the anti-plagiarism software for assessments and computer access.

5.4 HIC Teacher Forum provides an opportunity for lecturers to discuss issues around digital learning. At the Forum in October 2015 staff asked for more training on the VLE in order to use it to its full potential. It was also reported that there were insufficient computers in the Academic Staff Room for lecturers to use, that some were very slow and that difficulties had been experienced using the white board. The development needs of lecturers are also identified via Peer Observation or Management Observation.

5.5 Students are taught how to use the VLE during induction workshops and at the beginning of every module. The use of plagiarism-detection software is included in the ILSC module and students feel well prepared. The students also use the University VLE and confirm they have no difficulty using the different platforms as they are very similar.

5.6 Navitas UK's Introduction to IT November 2015 makes it clear how to get IT support. This is provided to Colleges by the Navitas IT team, which visits periodically.

5.7 Navigate is a new student information system currently being piloted in Australia. It is due to be introduced in autumn 2016. The VLE will operate within Navigate.

5.8 The review team concludes that, while the 2015-16 Virtual Learning Strategy is being implemented across HIC network, digital learning is at the early stages of development. The focus to date has been primarily on the use of the VLE, which is an effective medium for staff and students. While the team acknowledges that there is some good practice among the academics, as identified in the Virtual Learning Strategy aims, there is scope for further development to embed digital literacy within the curriculum.

## 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 24-27 of the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\) handbook](#)

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality)

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx)

### 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.

### **Embedded college**

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Public information**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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