Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of International Business College Manchester Ltd

May 2018

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the International Business College Manchester Ltd. The review took place from 29 May to 1 June 2018 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Nick Dickson
- Mr Mark Foster.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not 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 (Alternative Providers) 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
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA[2] and explains the method for Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers).[3] 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/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/higher-education-review.

Key findings

Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its awarding organisations **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice**.

- The highly personalised approach to learning and teaching that supports students' needs and achievements (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By September 2018:

- develop and implement a rigorous process for the production and approval of public information ensuring that information aligns with current legislation and Competition and Markets Authority guidance (Expectation C)
- revise student terms and conditions to meet statutory and regulatory requirements (Expectation C).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the introduction of new procedures to formally record evaluation of the quality of learning opportunities at programme level (Enhancement).

About the provider

The International Business College Manchester Ltd (IBCM) formed its own company in 2011, having previously operated as part of Berlitz Manchester, a language school based in Manchester City Centre. It continues to share premises and facilities with Berlitz.

At higher education level, the College is accredited by Pearson to deliver level 4 and 5 higher national certificate (HNC) and higher national diploma (HND) programmes in Business in addition to level 7 programmes in Strategic Management and Leadership (Award, Certificate, Diploma and Extended Diploma). Shortly before the review visit the College learned that it has been accredited by Pearson to deliver level 4 and 5 HNC and HND programmes in Mechanical Engineering and in Electrical Engineering. The College is also accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) to deliver a level 5 (as well as a level 3) programme leading to an ILM award. The College has previously offered an HNC and HND in Petroleum Engineering leading to awards of the Scottish Qualifications Authority. A Level 3 International Foundation Diploma is also offered.

Programme leaders have been identified for each accredited programme to provide academic leadership and to serve as the point of contact for the programme for which they are responsible. Academic staff work on a freelance basis.

The ILM programmes which are offered through face to face and distance learning study modes are proving attractive to students who are working and seeking to develop their careers. At the time of the review 15 students were enrolled at the College. Of these, 12 are distance learners and three are studying face to face.

The College mission is to 'provide a friendly and enjoyable learning experience delivered by professional and supportive staff who are committed to supporting their students study and career goals'.

In 2016 the College underwent Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER(AP)), which resulted in positive outcomes. The subsequent annual monitoring visit in October 2017 found that, while the College was making progress in some areas, improvement was required with implementing the action plan arising from the HER (AP).

Since then, the College has continued to maintain the good practice identified in the HER (AP) and has made some progress with further implementing its recommendations.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

1   Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

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* (FHEQ) 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 does not have degree awarding powers. It currently delivers programmes on behalf of its awarding organisations, Pearson and the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) who are responsible for ensuring that academic standards are set and maintained, as appropriate, taking account of external reference points relating to higher education. Responsibilities checklists set out the respective responsibilities of the College and its awarding organisations.

1.2   The College is responsible for all aspects of the operational delivery of the programmes it offers and for maintaining standards in respect of learning and teaching and effective assessment. It is required to adhere to the awarding organisations' published guidelines and this is checked through the awarding organisations' review processes, including Academic Management Review in the case of Pearson and ILM's Annual Centre Review. The College relies on the awarding organisations to ensure that the programmes it

is approved to deliver align with relevant frameworks and are based upon appropriate benchmarks. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3   The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements by scrutinising a range of documentation relating to academic standard-setting. The team also met staff and spoke to three students (one face to face and two by telephone) to gather student feedback.

1.4   Guidance issued by the relevant awarding organisation provide a clear framework for the management of academic standards by the College. The College underpins the awarding organisations' guidance by its own policies and procedures which are used effectively. Awarding organisation reports on the College indicate that academic standards are being met.

1.5   Effective systems are in place to ensure that threshold academic standards are secure and take account of appropriate external reference points. The Expectation is met 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   As awarding organisations for the College's current higher education provision, Pearson and ILM are ultimately responsible for securing academic standards based on academic frameworks and regulations that inform the award of academic credit and qualifications. Quality assurance processes established by Pearson and ILM ensure that there is a shared understanding of the awarding organisations' requirements. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.7   The review team tested the Expectation by exploring a range of relevant documentation and held discussions with students and staff regarding the governance of academic frameworks and regulations. The team established how awarding organisations' regulations were applied and explored how academic governance operated within the College.

1.8   As an approved centre, the College adheres to the published guidelines, regulations and quality assurance processes of its awarding organisations, evidenced by awarding organisation reports on the College.

1.9   The College uses monthly management meetings, involving the Managing Director, who is also the Acting Principal, and the Acting Quality Manager in maintaining oversight of academic standards with regard to programme delivery on behalf of the awarding organisations. The Programme Leader for each programme acts as the main link between the College and the relevant awarding organisation and is responsible for the operational delivery of the relevant curriculum.

1.10   The College works effectively with external examiners to ensure consistency of academic standards and assessment and academic staff at the College are responsive to external feedback.

1.11   The College, in partnership with its awarding organisations, operates an academic framework and regulations which supports appropriate academic governance of the award of academic credit and qualifications. The Expectation 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

1.12   The awarding organisations are responsible for maintaining the definitive documentation for the programmes the College offers. Programme specifications setting out programme aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks describe the qualifications.

1.13   The College has responsibility checklists in place for its awarding organisations, which detail where assessment and monitoring and review decisions are made. These procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.14   The review team tested the Expectation by examining a range of documentation relating to the maintenance of definitive programme documentation and through discussion with staff and students.

1.15   The team explored the College's responsibilities to its awarding organisations for ensuring that the curriculum is delivered and assessed in accordance with its awarding organisations' requirements. It also considered the implementation of the College's policies and procedures in more detail.

1.16   Awarding organisation regulations provide limited opportunities for the College to amend programmes or modules. However, the College has consciously and sensibly chosen modules from awarding organisations' programme specifications that are best suited to its students' needs and the resources available to the College.

1.17   The key responsibilities for the maintenance of the definitive record of each programme are held by the awarding organisations. The Expectation 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

1.18　　Responsibility for the approval processes of all taught programmes rests with the respective awarding organisation (Pearson or ILM). The awarding organisations ensure that standards are set at the level required to meet UK threshold standards for the qualifications they award.

1.19　　The College's Development and Improvement Plan includes operational planning, programme business development and recommendations arising from reports received from the awarding organisations. New course provision and online delivery have been identified as development priorities in the 2017-18 academic year. The processes adopted by the awarding organisations and the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.20　　The review team tested this expectation by evaluating the effectiveness of the programme approval processes through consideration of the course approval and review policy, approval documentation to and from the awarding organisations, staff meeting minutes, monitoring and visit reports, and meetings with staff.

1.21　　The College operates its programmes within the required parameters of its awarding organisations, as set out in annual review reports and relevant approval letters. Regular College staff meetings are used to discuss new course proposals, the progress of student applications and the reports arising from monitoring visits.

1.22　　Each awarding organisation is responsible for verifying that the College has developed and operated appropriate quality assurance processes for the awards claimed. Awarding organisation reports indicate satisfaction with the processes in place at the College.

1.23　　Effective quality assurance processes are in place and these are fully understood by staff. The Expectation is met and 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

1.24   The College has a Quality Assurance and Improvement Policy and an associated Assessment and Verification Policy. The policies and procedures are held electronically as a Quality Folder on a shared drive and in hard copy. Documents are dated and reviewed annually.

1.25   External verifiers from awarding organisations undertake external evaluation of the College's quality assurance processes. Verifiers visit the College to undertake quality checks and to ensure standardisation of assessment decisions. Module/unit specifications supplied by the awarding organisations indicate that programmes have been designed at an appropriate level. The College's policies and procedures are designed to enable the College to oversee implementation of the specifications provided by the awarding organisations responsible for the award of credit. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.26   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing documentation, including the quality improvement and assessment and verification policies, external verification reports, standardisation meeting notes, internal verification documents and programme and unit specifications. The team also explored staff understanding of the processes and how these operate in practice.

1.27   The College's Quality Assurance and Improvement Policy outlines its approach to ensuring continuing quality improvement, which is also associated with the Assessment and Verification Policy that describes assessment processes more fully.

1.28   There is clear evidence of internal verification and standardisation processes and reports by external verifiers on the assessment outcomes. Staff who met the team demonstrated a clear understanding of expectations and teaching requirements as well as assessment processes at different programme levels. External examiners confirm that assessment aligns with the requirements set out in programme specifications and module/unit specifications provided by the awarding organisations.

1.29   Assessment is undertaken at an appropriate level. The marking criteria are clear to both staff and students. The Expectation is met and the associated level 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

1.30   Awarding organisations undertake external verification of the College's assessment and quality processes to provide assurance that standards have been maintained. This oversight informs the self-assessment process adopted by the College. The College has a Quality Assurance and Improvement Policy and reviews and discusses programmes both informally and formally through staff meetings. It has introduced a programme review pro forma requiring programme leaders to evaluate the programmes for which they are responsible. The policies and procedures in place for the monitoring and review of programmes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.31   To test the Expectation, the review team considered a range of documents including the Quality Folder, available in electronic and hard copy form, setting out College policies and procedures that apply staff meeting minutes; and programme leader interim and annual review documentation. The team also explored the processes for monitoring and review through discussion with staff.

1.32   The Quality Folder is a useful reference point for staff although it relies on the Acting Quality Manager to ensure that its currency is maintained and aligns with the information available electronically. The College plans to review its policies annually (in August) to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose in the light of experience and changes in the external environment.

1.33   On the basis of the monitoring and review of their programmes, programme leaders are required to prepare a development plan addressing any issues identified. Their reports, shared at staff meetings, inform the College Development and Improvement Plan which is reviewed at both management and staff meetings.

1.34   The programme leader's 2017-18 annual monitoring and review report for the HND Petroleum Engineering has been completed, prompting further refinements to the template to be used by staff. The ILM Programme Leader has also undertaken an informal mid-year review to ensure that the programme is operating as intended and is meeting students' needs.

1.35   The College's Annual Monitoring Review and Visit Policy describes the use to be made of external examiners' reports. Matters raised by external examiners are reviewed in regular staff meetings and development points are agreed. Regular, scheduled, minuted meetings, attended by programme leaders and teaching staff, consider learning and teaching and have a clear focus on quality and academic standards.

1.36   The College has arrangements in place, through the self-assessment process and the regular monthly staff meeting to ensure the maintenance of academic standards. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk 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

1.37   The College adheres to the policies and procedures of its awarding organisations. These require external verification and evaluation of the College's quality assurance processes through regular visits to the College to ensure that UK threshold standards are achieved and academic standards required by the awarding organisations are maintained. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.38   The review team tested the Expectation through a review of the policies and procedures contained in the Quality Folder; the Programme Leader Role Description; staff meeting minutes; the Assessment and Verification Policy; awarding organisation visit reports; and meetings with staff.

1.39   The Quality Assurance and Improvement Policy describes processes for continuous improvement through self-evaluation and associated action planning. This is supported by a complete set of policies contained within the Quality Folder. Programme leaders serve as the Quality Nominee for the awarding organisations ultimately responsible for the quality and standards of the programmes they lead. Staff who met the team clearly understood their roles and responsibilities.

1.40   Awarding organisations' visit reports are reviewed as part of regular staff meetings and the outcomes of external visits are shared with any associated development actions being identified and completed.

1.41   Assessment and verification processes are effective. The College complies with the requirements of its awarding organisations and good use is made of the reports of external verifiers to ensure that academic standards are maintained. The team, therefore, 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/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.42   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All expectations for this judgment area are met with a low level of risk.

1.43   There are no features of good practice, affirmations or recommendations in this judgement area.

1.44   The team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of awarding organisations at the provider **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, Development and Approval*

Findings

2.1   The College currently delivers programmes leading to awards of the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and Pearson. The responsibilities checklists provided indicates that the College shares responsibility for programme development and approval with ILM. Pearson is responsible for designing and approving the Higher National qualifications and for gaining recognition by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) for these qualifications. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.2   The review team tested the Expectation through a review of the Qualifications Log, awarding organisation reports, programme specifications and meetings with staff and students.

2.3   The Qualifications log demonstrates that the College operates within the awarding organisations' requirements. The approval documentation reviewed confirms that the programme design, development and approval processes are secure.

2.4   The College is delivering programmes using standard programme specifications devised by Pearson and ILM. Staff who met the team confirmed arrangements for publishing specifications and clearly described their responsibilities.

2.5   The team concludes that the College operates within the scope of the awarding organisations. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk 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 to Higher Education*

Findings

2.6   The College has a student recruitment policy which details its approach to recruitment for its programmes. The policy is underpinned by key information (including programme specifications) being made available to applicants on the College website. Processing of applicants is guided by an enquiries process flowchart. Following the 2017 QAA annual monitoring review, the College has brought in, and published on its website, an admission appeals policy for prospective students. These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.7   The review team scrutinised a range of documentation relating to recruitment and admissions processes and reviewed information provided for prospective candidates on the College website. The team met a cross-sample of academic and professional support staff and discussed the recruitment and admissions process with students.

2.8   Senior managers at the College (the Acting Principal and Acting Quality Manager) take an overarching responsibility for managing all aspects of student recruitment. The College's approach to admissions has been enhanced recently by the recruitment of a Business Development Manager who is involved in speaking to prospective students making enquiries about programmes at the College. The College is keen to ensure students make the right decision about choosing a programme according to their prior experience and particular needs (see paragraph 3.9). Students who spoke to the team appreciated the assistance given to them by the Business Development Manager and the ILM Programme Leader in particular. The application form informs students about their rights and includes terms and conditions, but does not take account of CMA guidance (see paragraph 3.9).

2.9   Once a student has accepted a place at the College, procedures are implemented to ensure effective support for the prospective student, underpinned by the admissions flowchart. There are clear approaches to dealing with the admission of students, including international students requiring a Tier 4 visa.

2.10   On entry, some students are required to take literacy and numeracy tests to ensure they meet the minimum requirements of the relevant awarding body. In some instances, for example, where a student has evidence of prior experiential learning, the requirement to take entrance tests is waived. ILM students fall into this category and are not subject to literacy of numeracy tests. However, there is no overarching list of qualifications or prior experiential learning evidence indicating where tests could be waived and the absence of such a list may expose the College to a claim of inequitable treatment by potential candidates.

2.11   The admissions flowchart and its operation, and the use of differential initial assessment for applicants, are new processes for the College. The team considered that it will take some time to evaluate the effectiveness of these processes.

2.12   The College has enhanced its approach to recruitment and admissions, which is clearly understood by staff. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.13   The College has a learning and teaching policy which details its approach to delivering programmes to students. In addition, the College has an examinations and external assessment policy and a range of other policies relating to how it delivers the curriculum on behalf of its awarding organisations. The approaches implemented and the accompanying processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.14   The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a wide range of documentation relating to learning and teaching in addition to assessment and evaluation of programme delivery. The team also discussed the learning and teaching approaches adopted by the College with staff and students.

2.15   Lead responsibility for assuring the quality of teaching and learning is effectively undertaken by programme leaders who report to the Acting Quality Manager and the Acting Principal (the Managing Director). Learning and teaching-related issues are discussed at monthly management meetings.

2.16   Development of teaching and learning is supported by teacher appraisal, which was also supplemented by peer review by colleagues. Appraisals are carried out annually. The Acting Quality Manager provides support to new members of staff, including those with experience of teaching in other higher education providers. For example, staff members with university teaching experience who were able to draw upon continuing professional development opportunities at local universities expressed their appreciation for the training and support the College provided in developing their understanding of awarding organisation requirements.

2.17   The College places high emphasis on student attendance and monitoring. Measures taken to address poor attendance are set out in a student attendance policy. To support its distance learners the College has a log of learning hours, which students are required to complete to indicate where learning has taken place. Students felt that this was a positive addition to their learning support. Students also indicated that staff are highly responsive and open to student contact, which actively aided their learning.

2.18   Student engagement in learning and teaching is supplemented through induction sessions and the provision of key documentation sent out by programme leaders by email. Students felt this information was appropriate and gave them everything they needed to approach their studies.

2.19   The team noted that the introduction of a new management information system has the potential to provide useful data for evaluation purposes. However, this is embryonic in its development at present due to the small numbers of students studying at the College.

2.20   There are effective processes in place to provide an effective basis for learning and teaching and to engage students in learning in an appropriate learning environment suited to their needs. Consequently, the Expectation is met and 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

2.21   The processes and polices the College has in place to underpin its approach to enabling student development and achievement include its learning and teaching policy and its assessment and verification policy. Students are issued with an individual learning plan, identifying their specific goals, objectives and any support needs. This plan is then updated as part of the learner progress review process involving programme leaders and students. The approaches implemented and the accompanying processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.22   The review team tested the Expectation by considering a wide range of documentation relating to learning and teaching, including assessment and evaluation of programme delivery. The team also spoke to staff and students about the arrangements in place to enable student development and achievement.

2.23   All students receive a comprehensive induction introducing them to the College, and to staff and facilities at the College. The College provides an intensive and supportive study environment. Teaching is undertaken in small groups with high levels of contact. On joining the College, all students are allocated a personal tutor to support them in their academic and pastoral development.

2.24   The learner progress review process enables staff and students to review student performance and any action required to enhance the quality of the student experience and to enable students to realise their potential and achieve their specific goals. It is used as a two-way mechanism to elicit feedback on progress from each student, as well as allowing tutors to guide students on how to improve their work.

2.25   Students were particularly appreciative of the responsive nature of the support provided by teaching staff, especially where they had been outside of formal education for some time. The effectiveness of support provided to students is monitored though annual monitoring, and discussed at monthly management meetings. The review team considered the highly personalised approach to learning and teaching that supports students' needs and achievements to be **good practice**.

2.26   The College operates effective mechanisms to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. 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

2.27   The College has previously operated a student forum to obtain student perspectives on the management of learning and teaching and has a variety of processes to capture student views. The systems in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.28   The team tested the Expectation by considering a range of documentation including policy statements, a continuing professional development flowchart relating to learning and teaching, programme and progress review documentation and a student questionnaire. It also explored how the College engaged with students to assure and enhance the quality of the student experience in discussions with staff and students.

2.29   The College created a student forum in September 2014, which last met in 2015. It does not currently meet because of low student numbers. However, the College has a range of other engagement processes in place to ensure that it gains and responds to student views. The engagement of students in shaping their learning opportunities includes an end-of-module evaluation, student questionnaire, learner progress reviews and the active facilitation of student requirements through an open-door policy. Students may give anonymous feedback by using a suggestion box. The College also operates a peer observation of teaching scheme which applies to all teaching staff. It includes students as observers in the process and the outcomes of the peer reviews are used to identify staff development needs.

2.30   Despite the absence of student forum meetings, students have sufficient opportunities to provide feedback through the responsive open-door policy, completion of an end-of-module and programme questionnaires that consider resources, accommodation, learning materials and support. Students also have opportunities to provide feedback during tutorials and in their scheduled progress reviews.

2.31   Staff and students who spoke to the team gave several examples of changes made in response to feedback collected, including adjustments to the assessment schedule and changes to module options.

2.32   Overall, the team considers that students have sufficient opportunities to make individual representations about matters relating to their programme. The College is clear that the full range of student representation processes will need to operate as cohort sizes increase. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

2.33   The College quality management systems are designed to ensure that awarding organisation guidelines on assessment and internal verification are met. It has a Development and Improvement Plan, which addresses assessment and enhancement issues. These systems would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.34   The review team tested the Expectation by considering a range of documentation including relevant policies, assignment briefs, verification documentation and assessor feedback, awarding organisation reports, continuing professional development documents, role descriptors and meeting minutes. The team also discussed the processes in place with staff and students.

2.35   New students receive initial assessment according to their programme type. An enquiries process flowchart explained the different approaches. Assessment may include free writing exercises as part of an interview. It may involve applicants completing an English and maths online review. An individual learning plan is drafted for each successful applicant in accordance with the Initial Assessment Policy. Assignment briefs address the assessment criteria laid out by the relevant awarding organisation and include dates for submission. Regular external verification by awarding organisations ensures consistency and the maintenance of standards.

2.36   All assignments are submitted electronically and scanned with plagiarism-detection software in accordance with the Plagiarism Policy. Feedback is provided using a standard assessor feedback form using assessment criteria linked to specific learning outcomes.

2.37   Programme leaders carry out Initial assessment in accordance with Initial Assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies. Staff and students were clear about the arrangements for initial assessment of learning needs.

2.38   There is an Assessment and Verification Policy and assignment briefs follow the College checklist and show evidence of internal verification in accordance with the policy. Students are made aware of assessment regulations during induction. They receive copies of the regulations in both electronic and hard copy forms in accordance with the Induction Checklist. The students were clear about how to access programme regulations when they needed them and indicated that assignment briefs were written clearly and submission dates provided.

2.39   The potential for academic malpractice is addressed as part of induction. Electronic submission of assignments enables staff to use plagiarism-detection software in accordance with the Plagiarism Policy and the Malpractice Statement.

2.40   Programme leaders are responsible for devising and delivering programme assessment plans. They liaise, as appropriate, with the Standards Verifier of the relevant awarding organisation and prepare internal verification sampling plans, undertaking internal verifier activity and leading standardisation meetings to ensure the quality and consistency of

assessment practice in accordance with the Assessment and Verification Policy. Students who met the team reported that feedback was useful and timely and supported the preparation of future submissions.

2.41   Standardisation meetings are used to agree and formalise decision-making processes through the scrutiny of samples of assessed work. External verification is undertaken by awarding organisations who therefore provide independent oversight of academic standards. The team viewed samples of standardisation documentation and found the operation of standardisation processes to be robust.

2.42   Staff undertake continuing professional development activity in relation to assessment policy and practice and staff who met the team were clear about the processes involved. Some staff had also completed recognised assessor awards to support delivery of lower level awards.

2.43   Students were clear about the assessment process and knew what was expected of them. External examiners were confident that assessment standards had been maintained.

2.44   The College has an effective framework in place for managing assessment. The Expectation is, therefore, met 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

2.45   The College's awarding organisations require and arrange processes of external oversight. These include external verification of assignment briefs to provide independent oversight and regular visits to the College by external verifiers appointed by the awarding organisations to ensure that standards are met. The College's Assessment and Verification Policy requires that feedback and recommendations arising from external verification are disseminated to staff and managers. These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.46   The review team tested the Expectation by considering documentation including awarding organisation visit reports, Standardisation Meeting minutes, the Assessment and Verification Policy, Student Progress Reports, and minutes of staff meetings. The team also explored the operation of the processes with staff and students.

2.47   Robust processes are in place for the external review of assignment briefs and standardisation of assessment decisions. External examiner reports from the awarding organisations are discussed by management and the relevant programme leader. They are also reviewed at the regular staff meetings which give full consideration to feedback arising from awarding organisation visits to the College. Where necessary, actions to be taken are agreed and incorporated into an overarching College Development and Improvement Plan.

2.48   Feedback from external examiners is also reflected upon at staff appraisals and in performance review and may also inform business development planning.

2.49   Students who spoke to the team indicated that information was available to them on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE) and demonstrated an awareness of the role of the external verifier.

2.50   There is evidence that externality is embedded in the College's quality assurance systems and that it makes appropriate use of external verifiers' expertise. The team concludes that the Expectation is met 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

2.51   The Development and Implementation Plan and programme review procedures provide the means for the College to review programmes and actions required by the College. Managers and staff monitor the performance of individual programmes, and trends in student achievement and progression as part of a programme's overall performance, through an annual review process. Information from the review process informs the annual College self-assessment report and the associated Development and Improvement Plan.

2.52   In addition to the internal College monitoring and review processes, its awarding organisations undertake regular review activity at the College to ensure that academic standards are met and that the quality of learning opportunities provided by the College is assured and enhanced. These processes, coupled with those internal processes adopted by the College, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.53   The review team tested the Expectation by considering documentation relating to Annual Monitoring Review, the Quality Assessment and Improvement Policy and the Development and Improvement Plan. The team also scrutinised staff meeting minutes and spoke to staff and students about their understanding and experience of the arrangements.

2.54   Staff reflect annually (in August) on programme performance using a pro forma to capture data from a range of sources including student and staff feedback, performance data and external examiner feedback. Actions arising from the review process are shared at team meetings and considered at individual performance review meetings.

2.55   The processes of review and enhancement at programme level are reflected in the College Development and Improvement Plan, particularly with regard to feedback arising from external examiner visits. Staff meetings are used to ensure that feedback on programme performance from staff, students and external examiners is shared.

2.56   The College is introducing a standard pro forma to be used by programme leaders for the purposes of a systematic programme review in August 2018. The pro forma has been trialled for the HND Petroleum Engineering resulting in amendments being made to the pro forma in light of this experience. An interim review of the ILM programmes has also been undertaken following a change in programme leadership.

2.57   Annual review meetings and regular monthly staff meetings capture effectively student feedback and provide opportunities to discuss programme reviews, outcomes of standardisation meetings. Meeting decisions and follow-up actions are formally recorded.

2.58   The College collects student feedback, student enrolment and performance data as part of its monitoring of student achievement and progression. The new review pro forma has the potential to enable the College to demonstrate, on the basis of data available to it, how the quality of the student experience is enhanced.

2.59   External awarding organisation review reports clearly inform development planning and the monthly staff meetings are used to monitor the implementation of the plans relating to academic standards and learning opportunities. Appropriate annual monitoring

frameworks and associated documentation are in place and will be used for annual review purposes at the end of the 2017-18 academic year.

2.60   The College is managing and refining its responsibilities for monitoring and review. The Expectation is met and 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

2.61   The College has a publicly available Complaints Policy and an Assessment and Verification Policy in place and encourages students to engage with tutors and management to resolve concerns. The complaints and appeals policies are included in the Student Handbook. A four-stage Appeals Procedure is also published on the College website and in the Student Handbook. An Admissions Appeal Policy is also published on the College website. The policies setting out the procedure to be followed in the case of complaints or appeals would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.62   The review team tested the Expectation by considering the complaints and appeals procedures, the Student Handbook, Assessment and Verification Policy, and induction materials. It also spoke to staff and students about their experience and understanding of the College's complaints and appeals processes.

2.63   The Assessment and Verification Policy requires programme leaders to make students are aware of the appeals and complaints procedures, should there be any concern about learning opportunities or assessment processes. Staff and students understand the procedure to be followed in the event of any complaint or appeal. The complaints and appeals policies are available in the Student Handbook and are on the College website (see paragraph 3.5).

2.64   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*

Findings

2.65   The College does not offer higher provision in conjunction with any organisation other than its awarding organisations, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

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

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

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.67   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.

2.68   There are 11 Expectations in this area, of which nine are applicable to the College. All that are applicable are met with a low level of risk. The team identified one feature of good practice relating to the College's highly personalised approach to learning and teaching that supports students' needs and achievements, thereby enabling student development and achievement (Expectation B4).

2.69   There are no recommendations and no affirmations in this judgement area.

2.70   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

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   The College is responsible for ensuring that published information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and it has processes in place to fulfil this responsibility. The College publishes information about its higher education provision on its website, in the Student Handbook, and on its VLE. The website includes information about programmes, facilities and policies. The VLE is a repository for teaching materials, information and student handbooks. Programme leaders are responsible for ensuring information on the VLE is kept up to date according to its awarding organisations' requirements.

3.2   Ultimate responsibility for ensuring the information the College publishes is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy lies with the Managing Director and Acting Principal. Information on the website is reviewed as a standing agenda item at monthly management meetings. The new Business Development Manager assists the College in promoting its programmes and monitoring enquiries to the College. The processes that the College has in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.3   The review team tested the Expectation by meeting students and staff, and by scrutinising published materials, minutes of meetings, the VLE, and the website.

3.4   The October 2016 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) report recommended that the College review and update policies and the Student Handbook to ensure they are fit for purpose because limited information or signposting to information on the regulations specific to each awarding organisation was available in the College handbook at that time. The 2017 annual monitoring visit concluded that progress had been made following the 2016 review but that improvement was required.

3.5   The first recommendation from the 2016 review required the College to ensure that clear and comprehensive complaints and appeals policies and procedures are accessible for prospective and current students. The College's development and improvement plan states that action had been taken and completed to ensure complaints and appeals policies are issued to students at induction, and that these are made available on the website and in the Student Handbook. Students who spoke to the team confirmed that they were sent these policies on induction. As indicated in paragraph 2.63, the policies are included in the Student Handbook and are available on the website. An Appeals Policy in relation to admissions has also been produced and is available on the website.

3.6   In addition, the 2017 annual monitoring visit asked the College to review and update College policies and the Student Handbook to ensure they are fit for purpose. This action is followed up in the Development and Improvement Action Plan and the College reviewed and updated the Student Handbook in February 2017 and again in February 2018. The team noted that the Student Handbook did not contain a full set of regulations related to the programme of study concerned and that it was generic in nature. The College acknowledged this. The College indicated that a full set of regulations was available on the website, in hard copy, and that the relevant programme leader provides the regulations to students by

electronic means. On further examination of the website, a full set of regulations for the programmes of study was not available. The current arrangements by which students, who may study face to face or online, receive detailed information on their programme from staff who are freelance in nature would be strengthened if the College website also provided students with ready access to up-to-date programme and module specifications and programme regulations as well as key policies relating to each programme.

3.7   The Acting Quality Manager reviews the Student Handbook annually. Students receive key documentation including the handbook and other policies from the relevant programme leader by email at the start of their programme. Policies are also available on the website and the VLE. Students who spoke to the team reported that they had access to the documentation they required for their studies and felt able to contact staff members if there was a need for clarification. Information provided by the Business Development Manager in discussing options for prospective programmes of study was helpful and enabled them to make an informed decision.

3.8   The College's Development and Improvement Plan states that the website was reviewed and updated in March 2018. Senior managers confirmed that 'systematic reviews' of information had been carried out. The review team examined the website and found that the QAA logo was not being used according to the required QAA policy. The homepage on the website refers to QAA's Adapted Review for Specific Course Designation which was undertaken in June 2015. The link to the report is broken. The reference to the Adapted Review sits alongside the judgements from the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) October 2016 review. In addition, instead of the required link to the published version on the QAA website, the draft versions of QAA's October 2016 review report and October 2017 annual monitoring report appear elsewhere on the College website (under Student Experience). The QAA logo should only be used by providers who have completed a review successfully, which was not the case with the 2017 annual monitoring review. The information published therefore has the potential to mislead prospective students about the current standing of the College with QAA. Given the outdated nature of the public statements made and the potential to mislead prospective students, the team **recommends** that the College develop and implement a rigorous process for the production and approval of public information ensuring that information aligns with current legislation and Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance.

3.9   The application form informs students about their rights and includes terms and conditions. The terms and conditions are revised on an annual basis, normally in August, or when additional regulatory requirements are introduced, such as the recent General Data Protection Regulations. The terms and conditions contained in the application form do not take account of CMA guidance which has been in place since 2015. For example, there is no student protection plan in case the College is not able to offer a particular programme of study for whatever reason, and there is no mention of a student's right to a 14 day cooling off period where the application and offer are made at a distance. The team were advised that once the College was committed to running a course, it would do so even in the event of low student recruitment. However, this does not take account of unforeseen events including the lack of availability of teaching buildings or the removal of accreditation, for example. The team therefore **recommends** that the College revise student terms and conditions to meet statutory and regulatory requirements.

3.10   The College has limited understanding of the responsibilities associated with the regulatory requirements of the Expectation, and has not planned significant action to address issues identified. Its approach to providing information which is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy is inadequate. The Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: **Not met**
Level of risk: **Moderate**

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

3.11   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.12   There are no features of good practice or affirmations or good practice in this judgement area. There are two recommendations. The first recommendation is that the College develop and implement a rigorous process for the production and approval of public information ensuring that information aligns with current legislation and Competition and Markets Authority guidance. The second recommendation is that the College revise student terms and conditions to meet statutory and regulatory requirements.

3.13   The review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated risk is moderate. The quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **requires improvement** to meet UK expectations.

4   Judgement: 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   The College describes its approach to enhancement in the Policy Statement on the Enhancement of Student Learning Opportunities. The Statement sets out the arrangements for assuring the enhancement of learning opportunities through the effective implementation of key College policies and procedures. The Student Recruitment Policy and the Enquiries Process Flow Chart outline the processes for recruitment to College programmes. Initial assessment is informed by the principles set out in the Initial Assessment Policy and is designed to be personalised. Three pathways are set out according to whether the applicant requires a Tier 4 immigration visa, or whether the candidate is applying for a professional programme. During the admissions process, applicants may receive advice and guidance on the appropriateness of their chosen programme of study. The Development and Improvement Plan is designed to reflect feedback on performance from a range of sources.

4.2   The design of the College processes and procedures for the enhancement of its provision have the potential to demonstrate that deliberate steps are taken to enhance student learning opportunities and would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3   The review team tested the Expectation by a review of documentation, including the Development and Improvement Plan, policy statements, staff and student induction checklists, lesson observation templates, appraisal documentation, continuing professional development (CPD) documents and staff meeting minutes. The team also spoke to staff and students about the means by which the College seeks to enhance student learning opportunities.

4.4   The College identifies student support as a component of a strategy for enhancing student learning opportunities. Student support is enhanced by a staff open-door policy that provides access to support. This is complemented by well-established formal processes for tutorials and periodic progress reviews. Class sizes are restricted to a maximum of 12 students to allow time for a focused individualised learning experience.

4.5   Pre-entry assessment for Maths and English Language using a Pearson resource may be used to evaluate the suitability of applicants for their chosen programme and level of study. Students may be required to write a personal statement in the presence of the tutor responsible for admissions. The College arranges additional English classes for those students that need them.

4.6   The induction process for new students forms part of the enhancement strategy. It enables students to be fully informed about their programme and any additional support needs to be identified. The Induction Checklist sets out the processes and content to be followed. Students who spoke to the team confirmed that the induction arrangements adopted were effective.

4.7   The College has arrangements to support the maintenance of professional standards for learning and teaching staff. The Staff Recruitment and Development Policy sets out the arrangements for ensuring that appropriate staff are recruited and provided with the resources and information they need to work effectively. The teaching skills of prospective teaching staff are assessed prior to appointment in 'mini-teach' sessions. Once appointed, they are provided with an induction, required to participate in management-led

and peer to peer observations and an annual appraisal where CPD needs are discussed. The team found good evidence of activities undertaken to raise awareness of policies, procedures and the outcomes of assessment standardisation practices, particularly in monthly staff meetings.

4.8   The College has established a new self-assessment process to review provision delivered in 2017-18. Programme leaders are required to produce an annual Programme Leader Review using a standard pro forma. Programme leaders are required to reflect upon a range of programme data and feedback from student engagement processes on learning opportunities.

4.9   The College-wide Development and Improvement Plan provides an overview of quality-related issues relating to academic standards and business development. It includes some actions related to enhancement of student learning opportunities arising from student engagement activity.

4.10   Students who spoke to the team referred to the advice and guidance they had received from College staff in determining the suitability of their chosen programme and likely support needs. However, as they were studying at a distance on commercial programmes, they had not been required to undertake initial assessment. Students confirmed they were clear about what was expected of them at the outset of their programme and valued the highly personalised learning opportunities provided, enabling a flexible tailored approach to their learning development. They reported plentiful opportunities to interact with their tutor and to agree individual flexible learning schedules and related goals.

4.11   Some teaching staff have participated in self-evaluation processes in advance of the end-of-cycle review scheduled for August 2018. These include an interim review undertaken by a member of staff who had rejoined the College in the course of the academic year and an annual review prepared by a member of staff who was leaving the College. This activity provided opportunities for the new self-assessment process to be piloted in advance of its planned introduction in August 2018. Amendments have been made to the pro forma in response to experience gained.

4.12   The arrangements for advice and guidance, initial assessment, commitment to small class sizes, student support and identification of staff development requirements are specific enhancements that were planned, deliberate and systematic. The team **affirms** the introduction of new procedures to formally record evaluation of the quality of learning opportunities at programme level. The College is taking appropriate steps towards enhancing student learning opportunities. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.13   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.14   The single Expectation for this judgement area is met. There are no features of good practice but there is one affirmation relating to the introduction of new procedures to formally record evaluation of the quality of learning opportunities at programme level.

4.15   There are no features of good practice or recommendations in this judgement area.

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

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms that may be used in this report.

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

Awarding organisation
An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

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.

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.

Self-evaluation document
A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

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.