Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The International College of Oriental Medicine (UK) Ltd

November 2017

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 College of Oriental Medicine (UK) Ltd. The review took place from 1 to 3 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Seth Crofts
- Dr Nick Dickson.

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/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

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 degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

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

- The strategic management of the student journey, from recruitment to graduation, built on a partnership approach, focused upon strong professional identity, resulting in continuous enhancement of the student learning experience (Expectations B3, B4 and Enhancement).
- The innovative use of the professional development portfolio which supports students in undertaking structured reflection during each year of study, and which is used by academic staff to enhance the learning experience (Expectation B5).

Recommendations

The QAA review team did not make any recommendations.

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team did not identify any affirmations.

About the provider

The International College of Oriental Medicine (UK) Ltd (the College) was established in 1972. The College offers a single degree programme, a BSc (Hons) Acupuncture, which is validated by the University of Greenwich (the University), and accredited by the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board (BAAB). The programme is mapped to the BAAB professional standards and, on successful completion, students are able to register to become members of the British Acupuncture Council. The programme was last successfully reviewed and re-accredited by BAAB in March 2016. The programme has been validated by The University of Greenwich since 2009 and the University's revalidation process was successfully undertaken in January 2017.

The College's mission statement is 'to be a centre of excellence for acupuncture training, health care and research by the contemporary application of classical acupuncture'.

The College aims to be a small, specialist College and currently has 64 students registered. Modes of delivery comprise weekday or weekend attendance, both offered full and part-time, with a September start date.

The College is situated on a single campus based in East Grinstead, and comprises classroom, library, IT and office facilities, along with student common rooms and kitchen facilities. In addition, the premises include a student learning clinic. There are currently 25 staff. This figure has increased from 16 at the time of the last QAA review.

Since the last review there have been a number of changes, including

- a gradual programme of alignment of weekday and weekend modes of study
- improvements in assessment administration, requiring all course leaders to review their assessment procedures, and to ensure all team members are involved in marking and moderation.

The College finds that continuing changes to the Alternative Providers landscape (such as the Prevent Duty responsibilities, and increased levels of monitoring) can lead to burdensome and time-consuming activity for the Senior Management Team, and erosion of operating profits. The Senior Management Team are currently exploring ways to tackle this.

The College's last engagement with QAA was a monitoring visit which was published in January 2016. The findings of this report indicated that the College had made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the January 2014 Review for Specific Course Designation (RSCD). The 2014 RSCD identified an area of good practice related to the College's contribution to the development of the discipline of acupuncture and the sharing of good practice. It also identified five recommendations related to: lines of responsibility and accountability for committees; enhancing the minutes of appropriate committees; reviewing the terms of reference for the Programme Committee; formalising the approach to staff development; and developing the virtual learning environment (VLE). The College developed an action plan to address the matters identified and the review team explored the effectiveness of the actions which have been undertaken. The team saw evidence that all actions had been completed, and that progress on reviewing the academic governance of the College has led to an enhanced experience for its students.

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   Securing threshold academic standards for the award delivered at the College is the responsibility of its awarding body, the University of Greenwich (the University). The latter is responsible for ensuring that programmes meet the requirements of the FHEQ and its responsibilities are set out in the Memorandum of Agreement.

1.2   The College follows the University's procedures and processes to support the governance of academic standards and these arrangements would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.3   The review team met with a cross section of academic and professional staff and spoke with the Link Tutor from the University of Greenwich. The review team scrutinised documentation relating to programme review and annual monitoring and met with students in order to gather a wide range of feedback from the student body.

1.4   The College makes effective use of a range of external reference points to underpin its programme. The review team identified that the College had worked systematically during

the recent programme review and revalidation to ensure that the requirements of FHEQ are met. In addition, the team found that the College applies the Standards of Education and Training for Acupuncture of the British Acupuncture Council (BAcC). The College is subject to ongoing review from the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board (BAAB) who visit to monitor practice annually.

1.5   The programme team apply BAcC standards to all assessment activities. Clinical practice assessment is integral to the programme and the clinical experience for students is shaped by these standards, which are mapped across all levels of the programme. The BAcC Standards of Practice for Acupuncture are the set of professional standards to which all practitioners aspire, and these reflect much of the learning taking place within the programme. The College has recently undergone a process of reaccreditation, which confirmed that they are meeting the BAcC standards.

1.6   The review team established that there was a strong commitment to work closely with the validating University. This engagement ensures that students receive an experience consistent with other undergraduates. The University strategically manages the maintenance of academic standards and assists the College to ensure that standards are maintained and enhanced as guided by the University Quality Assurance Handbook. Effective engagement with the validating University is led by the University Link Tutor and the Director of Learning and Quality.

1.7   The College is responsible for all aspects of the operational delivery of the programme and maintaining standards in respect of learning and teaching and effective assessment. Extensive guidance is provided through the Quality Assurance Handbook, which provides a clear strategic framework for the management of academic standards by partner organisations.

1.8   Overall the review team concludes that the College has effective systems in place to ensure that operational delivery takes account of appropriate external reference points. The validating University has mature processes that ensure effective academic governance in relation to programme review and approval which secure threshold academic standards. Therefore Expectation is met and the risk in this area 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

1.9   The University, as the degree-awarding body for the BSc in Acupuncture offered by the College, has a comprehensive set of academic regulations which are aligned with the external academic infrastructure. Detailed reference is made to the academic regulations in the Student Handbook, and students are referred to particular sections to provide guidance on issues such as academic misconduct, extenuating circumstances or academic appeals.

1.10   There is a current Memorandum of Agreement in place, between the College and the University, which defines the responsibilities for each party in relation to the maintenance of academic standards. This document sets out clear expectations that the University provides the regulatory framework and provides systematic support to the College to ensure that academic standards are maintained and enhanced. The agreement describes the responsibilities of the University in relation to the oversight of academic standards and the management of assessment. These procedures would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.11   The review team explored a range of relevant documentation and held in-depth discussions with students and staff in relation to the management of the programme, delivery and assessment. The review team established how the University's regulations were applied and how academic governance was managed by the College.

1.12   The University Link Tutor plays a key role in ensuring that academic regulations are consistently applied by the College. The review team identified that there was a high level of engagement between the Link Tutor and the academic staff who were responsible for delivery of the programme. The College engages consistently with central departments at the University that support regulatory and quality assurance issues. The University Link Tutor chairs the Subject Assessment Panel meetings where the students' academic performance is subject to an in-depth analysis. The College has established a systematic process to monitor each subject's performance twice a year.

1.13   The College works very effectively with external examiners to ensure consistency of academic standards and clinical assessment, and the academic staff at the College are highly responsive to external feedback. Detailed discussions take place in relation to student achievement and progression and the academic team identifies steps to be taken in order to support students in reaching their full potential.

1.14   The review team identified that there were well-established processes that supported effective governance: a well-established system of programme management is overseen by a Director of Studies; an effective committee structure is operated by the College; and there was evidence that appropriate deliberations are taking place in relation to academic governance, with decisions being carefully recorded.

1.15   Regulations are communicated to students and staff through very comprehensive and well-designed student handbooks which are well used by the student body. Students demonstrated a high degree of awareness in respect of the regulations for their programme and the requirements for progression. Academic staff at the College demonstrated a high level of understanding of the requirements for academic progression and the nature of the

students' journey through the three years of the programme. They were conversant with the characteristics of the different levels of academic and clinical learning that take place. The review team found that staff at the College developed effective systems of student support, which facilitated growth and were underpinned by a good understanding of the concept of student progression.

1.16   After careful analysis of a range of evidence and meetings with a cross-section of staff and students, the review team concludes that the College, in partnership with the University, operates a well-structured academic framework, which offers clear and effective guidance, and which supports appropriate academic governance, thus meeting this Expectation with a low level of associated risk.

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

1.17   The University of Greenwich is responsible for maintaining the definitive documentation for the BSc in Acupuncture. This qualification is described by a programme specification setting out the programme aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks. This is published in the Student Handbook.

1.18   The processes of programme and course monitoring may lead to refinement and development of elements of the programme, resulting in changes to the course. The procedure for proposing and authorising course changes is overseen by the University. The rationale for changes is communicated to the University through a course change form that is completed by the College. This includes a detailed outline of the course, its aims, learning outcomes, indicative content, learning and teaching activities, assessment, and key texts, together with the data for University's Key Information Sets. These procedures would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.19   The review team reviewed a range of documentation relating to amendment to existing programmes and explored the provisions set out within the Quality Assurance Handbook. In addition, the team spoke to a cross section of staff and students.

1.20   The review team found evidence of a well-designed administrative process that was used to manage any modifications to existing courses. Programme proposal and programme change processes are explained in the University's Quality Assurance Handbook, which the College uses, and which sets out clear guidance and describes the procedures and responsibilities involved in approving programme changes. All changes are recorded centrally by the University's Quality Assurance Unit.

1.21   The team identified that the validating University and the College were operating very effective processes for deliberating upon and recording course changes. This ensures that definitive records of programmes are current and accurate. These processes ensure that the College is meeting this Expectation.

1.22   As a result of these findings the review team concludes that this Expectation is met and that the associated 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

1.23   The College's degree is awarded under collaborative provision by the University of Greenwich and there is an active Memorandum of Agreement in place to cover these arrangements. Responsibility for the approval of programmes therefore sits with the University and processes for the design and approval of modules, programmes and qualifications are approved by the University.

1.24   The College's Quality Assurance Handbook, which is the University of Greenwich's document, explicitly requires that its programme is designed to meet standards defined by the level descriptors set out in the FHEQ and any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and national guidelines. Parameters are defined for the College's responsibilities with respect to its awarding body, the University of Greenwich. The Quality Assurance Handbook also defines where alignment with the standards of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) is required to meet professional standards or allow for professional registration, including those of its PSRB, the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board (BAAB). The College continues to have shared responsibilities with the University of Greenwich with regard to programme specifications, processes for curriculum change and development, staff development and operational aspects of academic regulations. The University maintains responsibility for quality assurance, programme monitoring, Link Tutor monitoring and for student progression and award examination boards. Students abide by the University's academic regulations for taught awards and University student policies, including academic appeals and extenuating circumstances.

1.25   The College is required to regularly test, through its annual monitoring process devised by its University partner, whether programmes are meeting the defined threshold standards. This is reinforced through its periodic programme revalidation processes, underpinned by the regulations provided by the University. The College's regulations and procedures governing the design and approval of its programme provide a comprehensive framework for ensuring that its award meets UK threshold standards. This framework would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.26   The review team tested this area by examining documentation supplied by the College, as well as meeting with staff, the Link Tutor of the awarding body and students. In addition, the review team examined student handbooks and annual monitoring reports.

1.27   The procedures for the design and approval of programmes and modules are effective and robust, and the College applies them appropriately. The College further engages its PSRB in its programme approval work, which provides an effective means of linking academic learning outcomes to practice learning outcomes.

1.28   The College's longstanding expertise ensures that detailed arrangements are implemented fully. This Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

1.29   The College delivers its undergraduate degree in accordance with its formal agreements with its awarding partner. Assessment is monitored by the awarding body who appoint external examiners to ensure both UK threshold standards and its own academic standards have been satisfied.

1.30   The external quality assurance procedures in place would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.31   The review team tested this area by examining documentation supplied by the College, as well as meeting with staff, the Link Tutor of the awarding body and students. In addition, the team examined student handbooks and annual monitoring reports, as well as external examiner reports.

1.32   The procedures for the assessment of learning outcomes, and using the University's standards involving externality, are effective and robust, and the College applies them appropriately. The College further engages its PSRB in its programme approval work, providing an effective means of linking academic learning outcomes to practice learning outcomes. As well as meeting UK threshold standards, the College was able to demonstrate how its programmes were designed to enable students to meet PSRB standards which exceeded those of comparable institutions.

1.33   The review team concludes that this Expectation is met with a low level 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

1.34   The Quality Assurance Handbook sets out the College's approach to monitoring and review of its programmes. In reporting to its awarding body, a standard recording template is used.

1.35   The College regards the annual monitoring of its programmes as an essential element of its quality assurance procedures, providing an opportunity for reflection on the previous academic year and leading to action planning for the next academic year.

1.36   The College's annual monitoring process aims to ensure that the programme is meeting the stated aims and objectives, meeting appropriate national and international standards and is relevant to student and employer expectations. Additionally, annual monitoring enables staff to reflect on the previous year, record positive aspects in order to disseminate good practice and to identify aspects for improvement, and establish action plans to enhance the quality of provision.

1.37   The annual monitoring process requires each module leader to produce a critical module report which identifies aspects of good practice and areas for development. The report considers matters raised by students and actions taken. It also reviews the module assessment strategy, including student outcomes and makes recommendations for any amendments.

1.38   The College is also subject to major review by its PSRB, and the University concluded in their major review in 2017 that its PSRB (BAAB) in its work with the College enabled it to ensure standards are maintained. BAAB approved the programme unconditionally in April 2016 at its latest major periodic review.

1.39   The College's approach to monitoring and review builds from module to course and to cross-College level, and reports are considered at appropriate levels in the College structure. As such, what is in place would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.40   The review team tested this area by examining documentation supplied by the College, as well as meeting with staff, the Link Tutor of the awarding body and students. In addition, the review team examined student handbooks, periodic review reports, and external examiner reports.

1.41   The procedures for the monitoring and review of programmes are effective and robust, and the College applies them appropriately. As in Expectation A3.2, the College further engages its PSRB in its programme review work, which provides an effective means of linking academic learning outcomes to practice learning outcomes. As well as meeting UK threshold standards, the College was able to demonstrate how its programmes were

designed to enable students to meet PSRB standards which exceeded those of comparable institutions.

1.42   This Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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 College has a number of policies and processes for programme design, development and approval of programmes, in accordance with its University partner policies. These are detailed in the Quality Assurance Handbook and take account of relevant academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities and resources available to students.

1.44   All programme design and approvals are subject to the monitoring and approvals process of the awarding body. As part of these processes the initial stages require both institutional programme review and associated events that determine the appropriateness of, and confidence in, academic planning, delivery and internal monitoring at the College. In addition to external academic and professional members of validation and approvals panels, the College takes advice from professional body representatives in programme design.

1.45   Given that the College is reliant upon its awarding body and BAAB for the final design and approval of programmes then the processes that are in place would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.46   The College uses the full range of externality in its programme design and development, especially concentrating on the skills requirements of BAAB. A detailed mapping process has taken place linking academic learning outcomes and skills-based professional learning outcomes (defined by BAAB) to each FHEQ level. The students were able to clearly identify where assessment of learning outcomes met each level, both with their academic studies and the professional skill outcomes and commented that they felt they were more than adequately being prepared for their future careers.

1.47   The Expectation is therefore met and the 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

1.48   In reaching its judgement about the College's maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its awarding body, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.49   All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all areas. There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this area.

1.50   The responsibility for much of this judgement area lies not with the College but with its awarding body. The College has good relationships with its awarding body, particularly with the Link Tutor, and works effectively to implement the necessary procedures in order to ensure that it meets its identified responsibilities.

1.51   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **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 University of Greenwich is responsible for approving and for authorising changes to the validated degree award. They apply the Quality Code and the FHEQ to the programme and its components. These programme proposal and programme change processes are indicated in the University's Quality Assurance Handbook, which sets out, with clear criteria, the procedures and responsibilities involved in assessing and approving programmes. There are a series of stages of scrutiny before reaching final approval.

2.2   All programme design and approvals are subject to the monitoring and approvals process of the University. As part of these processes the initial stages require both institutional programme review and associated events, which determine the appropriateness of, and confidence in, academic planning, delivery and internal monitoring at the College.

2.3   The Programme Committee team is responsible for delivering the learning and teaching strategies and ensuring that students are informed and supported by the relevant materials. Course leaders are responsible for each of their courses and subject pathways. The Programme Committee meets a minimum of three times a year to discuss programme and course development, learning enhancement, student feedback, action plan monitoring, staff development, assessments/student results/progression and to monitor quality assurance of the programme. All student results and progress are ratified by the University Progression and Award Boards.

2.4   The processes put in place by the awarding body and adhered to by the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.5   The team tested this Expectation through a range of meetings with staff and students and considered several items of documentary evidence, including PSRB review reports, minutes of programme committees, the Quality Assurance Handbook, the programme specification and the Student Handbook.

2.6   The process is adhered to effectively by the College and is further enhanced by the College's interactions with its PSRB. The College was able to clearly demonstrate where the programme had been developed and enhanced, taking into account its students' and PSRB's feedback to ensure the programme was fit for purpose.

2.7   The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of 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 to Higher Education*

Findings

2.8   The College has overall responsibility for recruitment, selection and admission of students. The College describes its approach as a holistic approach to admissions, where selection and admission is seen as being the start of a relationship with the College and a key determinant of student success. The College indicates that it has done much work in recent years to enhance its recruitment and admissions process. The College meets prospective students in order to provide them with detailed information about studying at the College, thus allowing them to make an informed choice. A selection checklist is used and there is an opportunity for students to engage in taster sessions prior to application, before making a formal commitment to studying acupuncture. The admissions process is overseen by the joint principals of the College. The College has developed a systematic approach to conducting interviews, which aims to ensure consistency in the recruitment process.

2.9   The College is committed to promoting equal opportunities and seeks to provide new career pathways for students from diverse backgrounds and with a wide range of previous career experience. The College has developed a protocol for students who do not meet the formal entry requirements to complete challenge assignments, and it has demonstrated that many of these students go on to perform exceptionally well. Where students are unable to demonstrate that they currently have appropriate academic skills to complete the course, some candidates will prepare for entry by taking level 3 courses first, such as an Access to Health course, from local further education providers. The College liaises with the University where further advice is needed around prospective applicants. In some cases, advice may be sought from the University Admissions Department or from the Link Tutor. These processes would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.10   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 with a cross sample of academic and professional support staff and discussed the recruitment and admissions process with students.

2.11   There appears to be a strong level of commitment to link recruitment, selection and admission policies to the strategic priorities of the College and the process is overseen by a dedicated Admissions Tutor. To ensure that a consistent approach is applied the Governing Body and Senior Management Team take an overarching responsibility for managing all aspects of student recruitment and place much emphasis on the interface with prospective students. The College is keen to ensure that students are fully aware of the commitment that they are making and has linked effective admissions processes to student achievement and retention. The review team identified that this has had a very positive impact on both these areas. The taster sessions were well received by current students and supported them in making an informed choice.

2.12   Once a student has accepted a place at the College a series of procedures are implemented to ensure effective support for the prospective student. The Student

Administrator follows a set of procedures, including sending out starter packs, liaising regarding student loan funding, dealing with any enquiries and making regular contact with the student to make them feel part of the College community.

2.13   The review team found that the College operated well-established processes in relation to recruitment, selection and admission. This represents the start of a student journey at the College which is built upon the concept of a highly supportive learning community and aims to support academic and professional growth.

2.14   The review team concludes that the College has well-designed and tried and tested processes relating to recruitment and admission that are clearly understood by staff at all levels within the College. The College seeks to promote equal opportunities and to make the provision accessible to a wide audience of students who wish to join the profession of acupuncture. Therefore the review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.15   Staff at the College have formulated a diverse range of learning and teaching strategies that are informed by the aims and outcomes of the programme, as identified in the Programme Specification. There is a strong focus on addressing the professional standards as set out by the British Acupuncture Council (BAcC). The assessment strategy is mapped against the standards to ensure that students are properly prepared for professional practice. The increased complexity of theoretical study is linked to higher level practice skills, thus aiming to reduce gaps between theory and practice. The approaches implemented and the accompanying processes would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.16   The team tested this Expectation by scrutiny of a wide range of documentation relating to learning and teaching, and assessment and evaluation of programme delivery. The review team met with a diverse range of staff and students and carefully reviewed the student submission.

2.17   The review team identified that the College has a strong commitment to the enhancement of learning and teaching and there was a strong vision held by academic staff that they were part of a learning community that seeks to develop students' academic and professional learning to the fullest extent. College staff expressed a view that students were undertaking a personal learning journey and emphasis is placed not only on the development of a theoretical knowledge base and clinical practice application, but also on the self-evaluative and reflective skills, which enable students to apply this learning to professional practice. The students met by the team conveyed a very positive impression of the learning community at the College and the approach taken by academic staff to challenge and stretch them, in order that they develop high levels of professional knowledge that allows them to develop excellent clinical skills.

2.18   The review team identified that there is a strong commitment to continually review and enhance teaching and learning approaches to ensure the programme provides an exceptional student experience. In addition to formal processes of course evaluation and annual monitoring, the team observed that there was an ongoing commitment to critically review the learning and teaching and to discuss opportunities for enhancement.

2.19   The team identified a strong commitment to staff development both at a College level and as a commitment from individual staff, who see that continuous professional development is central to their work with patients, as well as their teaching role. There was evidence to confirm that a number staff are involved in a wide range of pedagogic and discipline-based staff development. The opportunity to complete the PG Cert programme offered by the University was well received by staff, and significant numbers have engaged with this opportunity. College managers identified that this had brought many benefits in terms of teaching and learning and academic development. This aspect of staff development had a major impact upon the recent course review and validation, as staff had developed new skills which enhanced this process.

2.20   The College staff make a strong commitment to peer observation of teaching. The review team found that this approach had been embraced by the staff, who made well considered decisions about selecting a colleague to undertake their peer review, who they felt would challenge them and help stretch their practice.

2.21   The teaching staff all have a long association with the acupuncture profession and the vast majority of staff are actively engaged in clinical practice, with a sessional role. Many staff have long associations with the College and most are actively involved in supporting the professional bodies of the acupuncture community and networking with colleagues nationally and internationally to further develop practice-based education in this discipline. The review team identified that the academic staff were using this concept of professional networking as a key part of their learning and teaching strategy. They were seeking to role model this networking for students and to encourage students to make this a key aspect of their own professional identity upon graduation. This approach was highly valued by students.

2.22   The College is committed to providing high levels of student support which addresses pastoral, academic and professional practice areas and reflects the commitment to provide a challenging but nurturing learning environment which empowers students. Staff and students reported that as well as operating an open-door policy in which support is available at any time, the student community was very cohesive and offered extensive peer support. Students receive frequent tutorials that are structured and help them to form a professional identity in their chosen profession.

2.23   The College demonstrates a clear commitment to managing learning resources effectively and putting in place appropriate specialist resources to ensure that students have sufficient learning opportunities. This commitment is addressed by all levels of the deliberative structure of the College, and students reported satisfaction with the resources provided on site at the College. However, there have recently been some challenges in relation to access of e-learning resources and the VLE, which were previously supplied as part of the collaborative agreement with the University. These resources have been withdrawn due to a change in the agreement. The College was in negotiations to resolve this issue at the time of the review. The review team identified that the College had worked highly proactively to address this gap in resources, for example in the development of high quality VLE resources using alternative platforms. Students identified that these contingency approaches were effective and that staff at the College had been highly responsive to their needs.

2.24   The review team concludes that the College has a clear vision and well-established approach to learning and teaching that is evident in the strategic management of the student journey from recruitment to graduation, built on a partnership approach, focused upon strong professional identity, resulting in continuous enhancement of the student learning experience, and that this is **good practice**. Therefore this Expectation is met and the level of associated 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

2.25   The College sets out its aims and approaches to teaching and learning in the Student Handbook and this is supported by a policy statement related to Equality and Diversity. In addition, the College engages in activities during the first week of the programme whereby new students are invited to consider their own learning styles and the strategies they may use to reinforce or change their learning patterns, in order to be a more effective learner. The College has an onsite student training clinic that provides opportunities for students to regularly practise their discipline. The College's approach to enabling student development would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.26   In order to explore this Expectation, the review team carefully scrutinised a range of documentation and met a wide selection of staff who held different roles at the College, including providing support. The team held detailed discussions with current students.

2.27   The review team identified a strong focus upon the concept of a student journey from recruitment to graduation, during which the College uses its resources to help students build a strong identity as an enquiring professional, able to contribute to their professional community upon graduation and become an ambassador for the discipline.

2.28   The College sets out two key objectives that underpin its commitment to student achievement and growth: to maintain high academic and practice achievements and to maintain high levels of student support. The review team found that these objectives are consistent with all aspects of the operational delivery at the College, which seeks to build a partnership with students to enable them to achieve their potential.

2.29   The review team identified that staff have ambitious plans for each student to achieve their potential and are able to articulate very clearly a vison of how academic progression can be harnessed to increasing levels of clinical competence to ensure a rounded development of the student as they move through different levels of the course. Students are encouraged to achieve highly and to monitor their own achievements. From the outset the expectation is that students are independent learners and will make good use of the opportunities given to them by studying on the programme.

2.30   There was very positive feedback from the recent programme review in relation to the development of autonomous, supported learning, and students commented positively about a supportive learning environment that encourages them to achieve their potential from the start of the programme onwards. The College employs a range of strategies to allow students to maximise their learning. If students have additional learning needs specialist input can also be sought from the University of Greenwich.

2.31   The College has small student numbers in all of the cohorts; this allows for a very close-knit community where the relationships between students and staff are informal and staff have a high level of insight into the progress of each student.

2.32   The College provides an onsite student training clinic, which represents the most significant resource for student learning. Staff at the College work in partnership with students to support their supervised practice in the clinic in order to achieve increasing independence throughout their practice sessions. This is managed in such a way as to build student confidence, while maintaining a feeling of safety for both students and patients.

The clinic serves a busy local community, and around 300 patients are treated there every month. Students reported that their experience in clinic was well managed and highly valued.

2.33   The College seeks to establish a community where students are encouraged to practise together outside the set contact hours. The team was informed that this works effectively; during 2016-17 both Year 1 and Year 2 student groups often booked out rooms in their own time in order to study and practise together. Students have set up collective social media pages and groups to share and support each other.

2.34   The strategic and systematic approach adopted by the College and the philosophy of developing increasing academic and professional autonomy that guides student experience at the College, based around the development of the student journey, contributes to the example of good practice identified in Expectation B3, and allows this Expectation to be met and the associated level of risk to be 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

2.35	The College has in place a system for student representation whereby at least one student per cohort is selected by their peers to voice suggestions raised by the student body and represent them on the Programme Committee. The College states what opportunities students have for engagement in the Student Handbook, which details the student learning contract. The College also collects student feedback through module evaluations and questionnaires about the College's provision.

2.36	The College has taken deliberate steps to engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their academic experience. These systems would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.37	The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with the College's staff and students, and reviewing documentation, including the Student Handbook, Programme Committee minutes and module questionnaires.

2.38	The College effectively defines its approach to student engagement and involves its students in all stages of its work. Its representational structures are robust, and students were able to state how and when they were involved in giving feedback to the College and reported how their feedback had been dealt with. College staff and students identified where changes to programme delivery had been carried out according to suggestions received by students, and these changes had actively enhanced the student experience. Students and staff considered themselves to be true partners in the learning process, and this was evident in each meeting the team had at the College, in addition to the external reviews of the College.

2.39	In addition, the College used its personal development module (linearly delivered in each year of the programme) in an inventive way to gain feedback from students on how their learning experience was received and could be enhanced. Students present their reflective portfolio annually to their peers and their tutors, and tutors are able to identify where student learning can be enhanced for future years. The use of the portfolio also mirrors the requirement of the professional body, and in this way students are additionally being prepared for professional practice. The innovative use of the professional development portfolio, which supports students in undertaking structured reflection during each year of study, and which is used by the academic staff to enhance the learning experience, is **good practice**.

2.40	The Expectation is therefore 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

2.41　　To meet this Expectation the College uses the same underpinning strategies as described at Expectation B4, including the Quality Assurance Handbook. Assessment regulations are defined by the University as awarding body.

2.42　　Assessment design for higher education provision is subject to approval by the University partner according to their specified regulations. All assignments go through a robust internal moderation process. The College uses second and double-marking processes, and assessments are ultimately checked by the relevant external examiner. All awards are subject to the scrutiny of subject assessment panels and a final examination board.

2.43　　The College recognises the importance of feedback both in terms of the quality of programme delivery and assessment: all members of teaching staff are expected to provide detailed and timely feedback to students following the submission of assignments for assessment.

2.44　　The summary reports emanating from external examiners ensure that assessment standards are maintained at the appropriate level, equal to those of comparable institutions. These reports are reviewed by regular quality assurance and course performance monitoring, taking place at the end of each academic session, informed by student feedback, by programme team review, by appointed external examiners and by comments from colleagues in the Subject Assessment Panel meetings. The resulting actions are noted in the University annual monitoring reports and aim to be carried out during the next academic cycle, or, as appropriate, with their associated impacts reviewed during and after the next course occurrence, with the intention to result in action planning as part of the annual monitoring processes.

2.45　　The College's procedures for assessment would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.46　　The team tested the Expectation through reviewing documentation, including assessment panel minutes, data from assessment panels, external examiner reports and annual monitoring reports. The team also carried out meetings with senior staff, students, tutors, and the University Link Tutor.

2.47　　The University Link Tutor is a pivotal member of the assessment process carried out in conjunction with the College. A recent enhancement was to move the subject assessment panels to the College itself, instead of holding them at the University. This enhancement allowed College teaching staff to engage fully in the assessment practice and to give holistic information about students to the panel, which otherwise was difficult to undertake because of travelling time between the College and the University. The professional body review of the programme and the external examiner reports confirm the College is designing and carrying out its assessment activities robustly and students reported they were able to demonstrate the extent to which they had achieved the required learning outcomes.

2.48   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

2.49   External examiners are appointed by the awarding body. Upon appointment, each external examiner receives a letter of invitation from the College providing details of the term of office, annual fees, brief information on the scheme, together with the University of Greenwich regulations. External examiners' reports are addressed to the awarding body and copied to the College. The Link Tutor ensures that external examiner reports reach the College and that the College responds to these accordingly.

2.50   External examiner reports are initially considered by the relevant Programme Management Committee and action planned accordingly. Apart from approving all examination papers and model answers, external examiners review and comment upon student work, the assessment process and the academic standards of the College. They make recommendations and report all findings in an annual report, to which the College gives official responses through the partner College monitoring mechanism. The external examiner contributes to decisions about student progress and student award at the University's Progression and Award Board.

2.51   The College is dependent on the University for the appointment of external examiners. However, what it has in place to respond to and manage external examiners and their reports would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.52   The review team tested the Expectation through reviewing documentation including assessment panel minutes, data from assessment panels, external examiner reports and annual monitoring reports. The review team also carried out meetings with senior staff, students, tutors, and the University Link Tutor.

2.53   The process works effectively. Tutors were able to explain how they had made changes to their assessment practices according to external examiner and student feedback. The College had adequately responded to any feedback the external examiner had made in its reporting mechanism, which was enhanced by the Link Tutor's interactions with the Subject Assessment Panel and Progression and Award Board.

2.54   The Expectation is therefore 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

2.55   The College has a variety of procedures in place for monitoring and review of all its programmes. The main processes in place are the requirements for module evaluation and programme monitoring reports. These processes follow the awarding body's regulations.

2.56   The College is subject to major periodic review by the University of Greenwich, BAAB and QAA, at periodic intervals. These range from four to five years and each review body has its own set of procedures and processes that must be adhered to by the College. Work has been undertaken to rationalise the reporting mechanisms in order to reduce the significant regulatory reporting burden on the College. At major reviews students, staff, external professionals and University colleagues participate in the development of the documentation submitted and also at the event itself. The BAAB event takes place over three days and involves meetings with all levels of staff including Governors, observing lectures and observing clinical practice. The BAAB officers also carry out an audit of the training clinic. Recent reviews and evaluations have all been successful.

2.57   The College has the necessary procedures and structures in place to operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and review of programmes. These procedures would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.58   The review team undertook a review of relevant documentation, including annual monitoring and review reports, and met with staff and students.

2.59   Programme monitoring and review is carried out effectively at the College. It fully engages all its stakeholders in ensuring their views are considered in any enhancements to the programme that the College decides to make. The annual monitoring process echoes the College's culture of continuous professional reflection. Its work with its professional body is integrated into its considerations of how to improve the programme for its students so that they are fully prepared professionals once they have graduated. Students and teaching staff were able to state how the programme had prepared them more fully than peers undertaking similar programmes.

2.60   The College has a culture of continuous reflective practice that underpins their procedures for monitoring and review of its programmes, and therefore this Expectation is met and the 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 uses the complaints and appeals procedures of the University of Greenwich. Student complaints are first dealt with at the College; if it is escalated, then the student has the right to complain to the University, via the Link Tutor, in the first instance. If the University cannot resolve the issue the student may go to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, to whom the College belongs.

2.62   The procedures outlined in the academic appeals and student complaints procedure are fair, accessible, timely and enable enhancement, which would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

2.63   The team met with staff and students, and reviewed documentation including the Quality Assurance Handbook.

2.64   The College reported that they had not received any complaints or academic appeals, and staff and students attributed this to the small numbers of students in the cohort, as well as the professional interactions between students and staff, which allowed for any concerns to be dealt with at a very early stage. The Student Handbook and Quality Assurance Handbook give detailed instructions of how the academic appeals and complaints procedures work, should students require them, and personal tutors were able to identify where complaints and appeals should be taken, should they arise.

2.65   This Expectation is therefore 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

2.66   The College does not work with any organisation, other than with its awarding body. Therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

2.67   The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.68　　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.

2.69　　All Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all areas. In considering Expectations B3, B4 and B5, the review team was able to highlight two features of good practice.

2.70　　The College has a strong focus upon the student journey and the development of the student as an enquiring professional. The College works effectively to engage all stakeholders in monitoring and review in order to provide high levels of student support and to focus upon high levels of academic and practice achievement.

2.71　　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 Memorandum of Agreement between the College and the University of Greenwich clearly outlines the College's responsibility for public information. The College takes responsibility for the publication of all its marketing materials and its programme information. The website contains clear information about the course, including course duration and modes of delivery, admissions, fees and funding.

3.2 The College provides students with a student handbook which provides information about their programme. The College has protocols to ensure that all information, such as student handbooks and assessment briefs, are continually updated and that version control is carefully managed. Students receive transcripts that provide detailed records of their progress from the College and the University. The arrangements for the production of information would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.3 The review team reviewed evidence from the College's website and student handbooks, marketing and recruitment materials that guide students, and materials in relation to assessment. The team received a demonstration of online learning resources. The team also met with a range of staff and students.

3.4 The review team identified that there were rigorous processes in place to ensure that this information was current and accurate and provided prospective students with a realistic view of all aspects of their intended course and life at the College. The University as the awarding body is required to approve all marketing material. The team identified that both College and University staff have a clear view of their individual responsibilities and the processes for checking and approving this information are well established. Current students expressed a high degree of satisfaction in relation to the currency and accuracy of information that they had been provided with.

3.5 The College has a well-developed website which is frequently reviewed by key professional staff at the College. This information was well received by current students, who identified that the website provided a valuable tool for obtaining initial information about study at the College.

3.6 The team identified that there is wide range of information available for prospective and current students and that this information is well designed and consistently checked to ensure accuracy and currency. The information provided for current students supports autonomous learning and supports the philosophy of the College, which seeks to help students manage their own learning.

3.7 The team concludes that there is a systematic approach operated by the College, which ensures that high quality information about learning opportunities is provided. This information is well received by students and subject to a process of continuous improvement. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation:　Met
Level of risk:　Low

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

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

3.9   The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.10   Information that is published by the College is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and there are processes in place that ensure the information is current and accurate. Students reported a high degree of satisfaction with the information they had received.

3.11   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** 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 acknowledges that it does not have a formal deliberative enhancement strategy. The College is clear about its commitment to enhancing its provision, and all members of the College were able to identify the responsibilities of each of its deliberative bodies in enhancing and sharing good practice, as well as leading on developments in learning and teaching.

4.2 The policies and procedures outlined in the Quality Assurance Handbook describe routes for instigating enhancement, stating that proposals may come from the joint principals and recommendations from external reviews, and more informal routes such as student forums and programme management committees. These policies, and the reflective nature of the College culture itself, would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The review team considered a range of evidence provided by the College and met with students and staff. This enabled the team to consider whether the design of the system was reflected by the experiences of different groups.

4.4 The College's annual monitoring reports describe that good practice has continued to be embedded. Students report that actions to make wider links with professional practice have led to opportunities such as interactions with regional groups of the BAAB. Teaching staff were able to identify where professional links with practice had actively enhanced their teaching delivery.

4.5 The College's approach to enhancement is systematic and robust in nature, reflecting the culture of a College-wide approach to sharing good practice. The process effectively facilitates the dissemination of good practice across the College. Staff articulate how subject areas are learning from good practice in other subject areas through the committee structure.

4.6 Students are clearly able to influence the cycle of enhancement through representation on decision-making committees. Additionally, students are able to articulate examples of where changes have been made as a result of student feedback.

4.7 The Expectation is met and the risk is low because the College has put in place policies, procedures and committee structures that allow the systematic translation of good practice into College-wide enhancement. The culture of reflective practice and engagement of its students in a partnership approach in the learning process enables the College to enhance its practice effectively and this contributes to the example of good practice in Expectation B3.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.8   In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against criteria specified within the Quality Code, summarised in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.9   In considering the Enhancement Expectation, the review team was able to highlight a feature of good practice, which supports the good practice identified in Expectation B3.

4.10   There is a College-wide approach to sharing good practice that arises from feedback from all stakeholders.

4.11   The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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 21-24 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) 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.

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.

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.