Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Irshad Trust t/a The Islamic College

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 Irshad Trust t/a The Islamic College. The review took place from 7 to 9 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Joanne Coward
- Dr Mark Lyne
- Mr David Firth (student reviewer).

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 the degree-awarding body **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 creation of an inclusive and supportive learning environment that is embedded throughout the College to support its mission and values (Expectation B2).
- The collaborative and personalised approach to student learning and achievement that enables students to develop their personal potential (Expectation B4).
- The College's extensive range of approaches to student engagement that promotes confidence and a learning partnership (Expectation B5).
- The combination of College and community outreach initiatives that enhance the student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By May 2018:

- formalise a process of editorial oversight that secures the accuracy of information across all platforms (Expectation C).

By September 2018:

- embed a process by which staff can more effectively understand and apply the principles of the FHEQ in the design and delivery of programmes (Expectation A1)
- develop grading criteria for each level of study, so that they appropriately reflect the FHEQ (Expectation B6).

About the provider

The Islamic College was established in 1998 to promote a sound understanding of Islam. Located in north-west London, The Islamic College is one of a few Islamic educational institutions collaborating with a major British university to provide excellent quality teaching in the Islamic field.

The aims of the Islamic College are to:

- offer Islamic education of the highest quality
- encourage research across a range of subjects about Islam
- cover the five Islamic schools of thought
- provide an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to Islamic studies for those interested in acquiring a critical, constructive and comprehensive understanding of issues and topics about Islam
- help students become more articulate, independent and flexible learners
- enable students to pursue their Islamic studies at a higher level
- prepare students for potential employment opportunities
- provide an inclusive environment for both Muslims and non-Muslims from different cultures and backgrounds.

Its mission is to provide the highest quality learning, skills and training through the collaboration with Middlesex University to meet individual educational needs and employment demands while adhering to Islamic moral values and principles.

This is underpinned by a vision whereby the Islamic College is dedicated to helping students fulfil their potential and to promote academic knowledge based on authentic original Islamic sources.

The College employs 18 administrative and support staff and a total of 20 Academic staff, three of whom are full-time and 17 of whom are part-time. All academic staff are highly qualified with most holding doctorates.

Student numbers at the College are presently capped at 50 students. Currently there are 40 students studying across six programmes. Five students are studying on the pre-degree Foundation programme, five on BA Hons Islamic studies, five on BA Hons Hawza studies, nine on MA Islamic studies, 11 on MA Islamic Law and five on MA Comparative philosophy.

All programmes are validated by Middlesex University under a longstanding partnership agreement.

The Islamic College has faced the challenge of being a pioneering institution specialising in the academic concept and theory of Islamic studies. This has entailed the development of a curriculum which both satisfies community needs and the formal components that give the course its academic credibility. The strong partnership between the College and its validating university is crucial in this.

The main changes undergone by the College since its last review by QAA in 2016 are to do with the development of resources which, it believes, position it to better meet the needs of its academic and wider community. The acquisition and development of a new teaching block has enabled the development of various educational and academic programmes at the College, making it possible for the Islamic College to run short courses, seminars and conferences in support of their mission, the wider community and the higher education programmes that it offers. Additionally, the new facilities have the capacity to enable the Islamic College to expand its provision in the future.

The Islamic College was reviewed by QAA in February 2014 under Specific Course Designation. This review identified a number of areas of good practice alongside a number of recommendations. In the annual monitoring review of 2016, the review team confirmed that the College had made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the 2014 review and had made acceptable progress in implementing 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 Islamic College offers undergraduate degree programmes in BA Hons Islamic Studies and BA Hons Hawza Studies as well as postgraduate taught degrees, namely, the MA Islamic Law and MA in Islamic Studies. The College is not an awarding body and therefore its programmes are validated by Middlesex University (the University). Each programme offered has its own Memorandum of Cooperation, signed by both the College and the University, which details the responsibilities of each partner in relation to the awards offered. The awards are designed using the University's Learning, Quality and Enhancement Handbook, which allows programme design to be cognisant of the expectations of the Quality Code, the FHEQ and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The handbook also details the approval and periodic approval policies and processes. The College has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Chester in which both institutions have agreed to open discussions with a view to approving a joint doctoral programme that would enable the College to offer a PhD programme to students.

1.2   The procedures outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met. As the College does not have degree awarding powers, its role is to support the maintenance of the academic standards of its awarding body. The respective responsibilities of each partner are set out in a checklist of responsibilities. The College achieves these by following the University's validation procedures for the approval of its programmes, which also provides assurance that the expectations of the Quality Code are met. The College demonstrates that it meets its other responsibilities through the completion of an annual monitoring report for each programme and through the approval and periodic approval of programmes.
The College team is supported in this work by the College and the University link tutors. The College's academic staff use the University's Learning, Quality and Enhancement Handbook's guidance on programme design to develop academic content for the programmes it delivers.

1.3   The review team considered a range of evidence relating to the agreement between the College and its awarding body both before and during the review. The team also met senior members of College staff, a representative of the awarding body and academic staff.

1.4   The College works well with its awarding body and effectively discharges its responsibilities in respect of the awards it offers. Staff are able to reference the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements when discussing their role in the development of academic content at programme and module levels. The close working relationship between the two link tutors benefits academic development and supports the assurance that standards are being maintained. However, it was evident that there was not a full and in-depth understanding, among teaching staff in particular, of the ways in which the combination of the Quality Code, FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements combine to provide an overarching infrastructure to support the setting and maintenance of standards. Most noticeable was the lack of a detailed appreciation of how the FHEQ can be used to determine the appropriate levels within programmes which, in turn, can be used to support student progression. Although staff are implementing them in practice, this is a result of the support provided by the senior team and Middlesex University. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2018, the College embed a process by which staff can more effectively understand and apply the principles of the FHEQ in the design and delivery of programmes.

1.5   While this lack of in-depth knowledge still allows this Expectation to be met, there is a moderate risk to future provision, particularly given the College's plans to develop further and higher level programmes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.6   The College's academic governance structure is designed to enable open and transparent leadership and management of the College's academic provision and its responsibilities to its awarding body. The academic governance structure consists of a number of committees, headed by the Academic Board, each with its own terms of reference and membership. The current structure is also intended to meet the College's obligations under the Prevent strategy. Academic Board is chaired by the Principal and is responsible for overseeing academic provision at all levels and prepares the annual monitoring reports for submission to Middlesex University. Academic Board is supported by a number of subcommittees including a Registry Board, Research Board as well as a Quality Assurance Committee. The Board of Study's membership includes student representatives and is the forum where students can provide feedback on their experience or raise other issues or concerns. Students also meet as part of a Student Council at which issues of concerns are discussed and forwarded to either the Board of Study or Academic Board for consideration. Other than these committees, students can attend any of the other deliberative committees by request.

1.7   The procedures outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.8   The College has incorporated Middlesex University's assessment regulations into its own assessment policies and these are provided to students in the respective programme handbooks and are available on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE). The College manages an assessment process for approving assessment as well as formative and summative criteria through its external examiners. The College operates both internal and external assessment boards to oversee the approval of marks and student progression. The College's external examiners and the Middlesex University link tutor attend the external assessment boards.

1.9   The review team considered documents and other evidence related to the College's governance structure, including terms of reference, membership and records of meetings. It explored how issues had been managed and responded to. The team also assessed the effectiveness of the framework for assessment regulations and their application in support of the maintenance of standards. The issues related to governance were discussed at meetings with staff and students.

1.10   The College's governance structure is effective and is in keeping with its desire to be open and transparent about its deliberations and decision-making processes. The minutes of meetings are unusually candid in the way they record discussion and debate but are in keeping with the College's ethos and values. Inevitably, given the relatively small size of the College team, there is an overlap of membership between committees and between formal business undertaken through the governance structure and the more informal action undertaken by senior and other staff. An example of this is consideration of external examiner reports which, while not formally considered at Academic Board, have nonetheless being thoroughly considered by College staff with responses sent to the awarding body and actions taken to issues raised. Students have access to all external examiner reports via Desire2Learn and were complimentary about the College's

encouragement for them to raise any concerns or comments at relevant meetings. Similarly, the Quality Assurance Committee, although formally a committee, is a small group of senior staff with delegated responsibility for ensuring that Academic Board, the Principal and other senior team members are kept informed about external policy developments and changes. This function is working well without the need for a committee umbrella.

1.11   On the basis the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.12   All programmes run by the College are approved and validated by Middlesex University. The validation process ensures the two-fold review of programme standards; internally by the College and externally in accordance with Middlesex University's regulations.

1.13   The College has an extensive and inclusive internal review process for its programme delivery, which includes monthly board meetings, programme meetings, and staff-student meetings. Students confirmed that their views were accounted for in the review of programme delivery and a full provision of records is provided to students via the VLE.

1.14   The procedures outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.15   The review team considered documents and other evidence, including meetings with staff and students related to the maintenance of records for each programme and its internal review processes.

1.16   While there have been no major changes since the validations in 2012, the College will have a revalidation process in 2018 for its programmes with the University. Additionally, the College has been holding discussions to have a validation partnership with another UK higher education institution to expand its postgraduate programme options.

1.17   The team was satisfied that the College adequately and appropriately maintains its records of each programme and its internal review processes, and that it meets its responsibility to provide records to students. The Expectation is therefore met and the 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　　The approval of taught programmes is the responsibility of Middlesex University and is carried out in accordance with Section 3 of the University's LQEH. The link tutors of the College and the University work together to ensure that the proposal meets the quality and academic standards requirements of the University set out in the LQEH. A validation event is then held at which a panel of senior staff from the University and external academics consider a range of documentation, in particular the programme handbook containing the programme specification and individual module specifications referred to as 'module narratives'. The panel meets representatives of the College and the University to discuss the proposal and concludes whether the programme is fit to be validated. Programmes are required to be reviewed and revalidated within six years of their approval.

1.19　　The procedures described in the LQEH for programme approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.20　　The documentation seen by the review team included programme approval reports and programme handbooks for both undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, and included an example of a Distance Education (DE) programme. The team also discussed the process with senior and teaching staff including the link tutors from the College and the University.

1.21　　Programme-level and module-level learning outcomes are clearly defined within the programme specifications and module narratives respectively. The latter contain information regarding assessment, which is aligned to the relevant module learning outcomes. It was also clear from the approval reports and discussions with staff that relevant Subject Benchmark Statements are being used effectively to ensure that threshold standards are being met. Although the process does make reference to the FHEQ, in discussion with College staff it was less clear how consistently this was understood and being used.

1.22　　The review team saw evidence of appropriate external input to the approval process with two academics from other higher education institutions participating in each event. The College also makes extensive use of its existing external examiners when developing its courses. The review events themselves consist of meetings between the panel and senior staff and the programme team, which are an effective forum for establishing that academic standards are appropriate. In the case of the MA Islamic Law review it was also clear that the specific requirements of programmes to be delivered by DE were being given careful consideration alongside those being approved for a more traditional form of delivery. The programme team is required to meet any conditions and consider any recommendations of the panel before the validation is confirmed.

1.23　　In all, the documentation produced for the consideration of approval panels is comprehensive and provides a sound basis on which to judge whether academic standards are set at an appropriate level. The validation events and the judgements arising from them are also effective in ensuring that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standards and comply with the University's frameworks and regulations.

The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.24   The College works within the University's programme approval and revalidation processes to specify qualification-level outcomes and module-level learning outcomes, which are contained within the programme specification and module narratives respectively. With input from external academics and University staff, and with reference to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the approval processes confirm that the learning outcomes are aligned to UK threshold standards. The College programmes are subject to the University's regulations, and the College's Policies Handbook contains further information about how assessment operates at College level. External examiners are required to confirm that assessment processes are robust and that UK threshold standards have been satisfied. Internal and external assessment boards operate in accordance with the procedures of the University.

1.25   Collectively these policies and procedures for programme approval and assessment would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.26   In order to test the Expectation the review team looked at the University's regulations, the College Policies Handbook, programme approval records, programme handbooks containing programme specifications and module narratives, external examiner reports for all of the College programmes, as well as minutes from internal and external assessment boards. The team also heard relevant evidence from senior and teaching staff.

1.27   The team was able to confirm that module narratives identify the level of the module within the FHEQ and contain clear learning outcomes. They also contain a clear description of the assessment tasks, including their weighting and linkage to specific learning outcomes. The team was satisfied that these were the product of a robust approval process with appropriate external input enabling the programme learning outcomes to be achieved.

1.28   The programme handbooks and assessment feedback sheets contain generic grade descriptors that are used as assessment criteria. These are not linked to individual learning outcomes at modular level and are not differentiated for work produced at different levels in the FHEQ. However, external examiners report that the methods of assessment are appropriate and that they have seen sufficient evidence to confirm that threshold academic standards are being met.

1.29   Internal assessment boards clearly record and confirm achievement at module level. External boards are equally clear in recording the classification and conferment of awards, as confirmed by the external examiners who are in attendance. The evidence provided to the review team confirmed that these boards were conducted in accordance with University regulations and College assessment policies.

1.30   The review team found that the processes for confirming the achievement of programme and module-learning outcomes, and ensuring that UK threshold standards and those of the University are robust. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of 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

1.31   Annual monitoring of programmes at the College takes place using the University's procedure which is set out in Section 7 of the LQEH. External examiners appointed by the University report annually on the academic standards and quality of programmes as part of the monitoring process. Programmes are reviewed on a cyclical basis within six years of their approval in accordance with Section 3 of the LQEH.

1.32   The programme annual monitoring report (AMR) which is compiled by the College and link tutors based upon a template provided by the University, draws upon a range of evidence including the external examiners' report and gives rise to an action plan.

1.33   In combination, the annual monitoring procedures, use of external examiners and the cyclical review of programmes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.34   The review team scrutinised examples of external examiner reports for all the College programmes and records of the review and revalidation of programmes. The team also discussed the monitoring and review of programmes with academic managers and teaching staff of the College and the University link tutor.

1.35   The AMR template, external examiner pro forma and documentation required for programme review are all comprehensive and fit for purpose. The examples of AMRs considered by the review team were informed by an appropriate range of data and made good use of the feedback provided by external examiners. The process also ensures that consideration is given to both the establishment and maintenance of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities.

1.36   The team saw evidence that the outcomes of actions from previous years' AMR action plans were being monitored. For example, in one case an AMR action plan confirmed that a course had been discontinued as planned and another confirmed that additional support and training sessions had been provided for academic staff to ensure a more consistent standard of academic work. However, the review team did note some inconsistency in the actions being set in terms of how easily their success could be measured and the timescale within which they would be completed.

1.37   In the case of one programme, the Foundation Year in Qur'anic Arabic, there had been serious concerns raised by the external examiner in their report. It was clear from the AMRs how the College was endeavouring to address these concerns, which included suspension of recruitment to the programme for a year and the provision of a number of additional staff support sessions. It was also clear how the University was working with the College to ensure that academic standards were being secured. More recent external examiner reports were considerably more positive but continue to be effective in identifying areas for further improvement. Although these issues took some time to be resolved the team concluded that the annual monitoring process had provided an effective framework and process within which they could be addressed and noted that they would be given further consideration through the programme re-approval process taking place in 2017-18.

1.38   The review team concludes that together the annual monitoring processes and cyclical review of programmes is effective in ensuring that UK academic threshold standards are achieved and those of the University are maintained. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.39   Middlesex University as the awarding body sets out the approval mechanism to be used for the approval, modification and re-approval of programmes and modules as set out in its LQEH. This mechanism allows external input into curriculum design and approval. In addition, the College uses its external examiner system to ensure there is independent expertise deployed to safeguard the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The external examiners review and approve all assessment questions annually, and in their reports are required to verify whether the appropriate standards and learning outcomes have been met. The University appointed link tutor also liaises with and supports the College in the provision of setting and maintaining standards. The annual reports compiled by external examiners follow a template provided by the University. The reports are submitted to the College for comment. Responses to each report are made by the Principal with input from other College staff, including the College's link tutor. All reports are made available to students via the College's VLE.

1.40   The approach outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team considered evidence provided by the College in relation to this area of activity. The team also reviewed reports generated by the College for consideration by the University as its awarding body and the outcome of this activity. In addition, the team discussed matters pertaining to this Expectation with members of the College team and the University.

1.41   The College uses annual monitoring to evidence the monitoring, review and alignment of standards using a template provided by the University. These annual monitoring reports are reviewed by the University link tutor and contain action plans in response to review activity, external examiner reports and student feedback.

1.42   The College is aware of the potential issues in working with a non-theological university as its awarding body and, as such, the College team has worked consistently and proactively to ensure that the University is aware of the challenges and requirements of curriculum design in the theological context that it works within. This successful close working relationship has enabled the University to provide the framework for design, setting and maintenance of standards with the College providing, in addition, the curriculum content. While the University provides some external subject expertise, the College has well-established contacts within the Islamic community and subject networks to ensure that curriculum content and design is fit for purpose and has the appropriate level of externality. Furthermore, the University offers training and development opportunities for College staff and the College's external examiners have provided support and training in relation to the setting and maintenance of standards, particularly in relation to assessment. In keeping with the College's approach, issues are openly and thoroughly discussed at all levels with clear outcomes.

1.43   While recognising the issues identified by the review team in Expectation A1, the team concludes that the College, working with its awarding body and its external

networks, ensures the appropriate level of external expertise in the design and approval of its programmes as well as the maintenance of academic standards. The Expectation is therefore 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

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

1.45   All the Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk apart from Expectation A1 which is judged a moderate risk.

1.46   From its scrutiny of a wide range of evidence, and through meetings with staff and students, the review team found that the College is effective in managing its responsibilities, in conjunction with the degree-awarding body, and is effective in maintaining academic standards. Adequate use is made of relevant subject and qualification benchmarks and external expertise in the development of programmes and their subsequent approval and monitoring, and qualifications are set at an appropriate academic level. However, these processes are not embedded in the procedures adopted by teaching staff at the College. The review team recommends that the College should embed a process by which staff can more effectively understand and apply the principles of the FHEQ in the design and delivery of programmes.

1.47   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The College and University link tutors work together with College academic staff to design and develop programmes. The purpose of programme validation and review is set out in Section 3 of the University's LQEH alongside guidance for the preparation of the relevant documentation. When the period of validation specified in the Memorandum of Cooperation is due to come to an end, existing programmes are reviewed and revalidated. In these cases, the programme team produces a critical review document in addition to the programme handbook, which is required for scrutiny by a validation panel.

2.2   The processes for programme validation and review set out in the University's LQEH would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3   The review team looked at documentation associated with programme design, development and approval including the University's LQEH; the report of an undergraduate programme review; the agenda and self-critical review for a taught postgraduate programme including a distance education version of the programme; and programme handbooks for all programmes delivered by the College incorporating programme specifications and module narratives.
The team also discussed the process of programme development and design with link tutors, the Director of Education and other academic staff.

2.4   The Director of Education supervises the involvement of academic staff in the development of the curriculum and the link tutors ensure that the documentation for approval meets the requirements of the University. It was apparent that the strong collaboration between the College and University link tutors was a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness and success of the approval processes.

2.5   The review team also heard how the College is proactive in seeking input from existing external examiners in course development. College staff confirmed their understanding of, and active involvement in, programme development and the opportunity that programme review provided to correct any weaknesses in the provision.

2.6   The review team also noted that a large number of academic staff are directly involved in meetings with the approval panel as part of the validation event. It was apparent from the documentation and discussions with staff that the interdisciplinary approach to curriculum design identified in the 2014 QAA Specific Course Designation Review was still in place and effective.

2.7   The University provides a helpful checklist for the approval of distance education courses and it was clear from the approval processes that the particular features associated with distance learning were given careful consideration during validation alongside the face-to-face version of the programme.

2.8   The review team concludes that the College operates effective processes for the design and development of programmes and rigorously follows the University's approval processes. 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

2.9   The College publicises its programmes through prospectus material validated by Middlesex University, which is made available in hard copy and online via its website, while also making use of social media, open days, and external recruitment visits.

2.10   Admissions criteria, including the requirements for English language proficiency, and the application procedure are clearly set out on in the prospectus and on the website. Information about financial assistance and visas is made available to students and handled by the Registrar. Admissions procedures include an interview for all prospective students.

2.11   The approach to recruitment, selection and admissions to higher education outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.12   The review team examined the effectiveness, fairness, and inclusivity of the College's recruitment, selection and admissions process, by analysing all prospectus documentation and the minutes for all College Board meetings. The team also met senior academic staff, teaching and support staff, and students. The team noted that all staff were able to clearly articulate the importance of the College's requirements to create an inclusive learning environment, including a number of key steps to ensure accessibility for disabled students.

2.13   The College is proactively developing its outreach activities to cement its position as an effective centre of learning within the community. The College's new facilities have allowed for the development of short courses, seminars, and a monthly lecture series open to the public. Examples of good practice in this area include the College's lecture series, the annual Islamic Art Exhibition, and its International Food Day social events.

2.14   The review team concludes that the College demonstrated **good practice** in its creation of an inclusive and supportive learning environment that is embedded throughout the College to support its mission and values. The team was therefore satisfied that the College adheres to UK higher education expectations for a fair, inclusive, effective recruitment, selection and admission process and that it is has the procedures and vision in place to maintain this good practice. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.15   The College does not have a formal teaching, learning and assessment strategy to underpin the delivery of learning and teaching. However, it does use a number of related processes that provide structure and support for the College's learning environment. The College also encourages an environment in which students and staff can engage actively in the learning process.

2.16   The College's recruitment policy for academic staff ensures staff have the requisite qualifications and experience to deliver the programmes offered effectively, although it does not use systems such as the National Academic Recognition Information Centre to confirm comparability of overseas awards staff hold. Instead, the College uses comparators with other universities and higher education providers to determine qualification levels. Newly appointed staff undertake an induction programme to ensure that they are fully integrated into College life. The College encourages staff to be research active and undertake staff development to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff development activity includes training on such topics as understanding external frameworks and the implementation of assessment processes. Training opportunities and needs are identified in the course of regular meetings, either initiated by senior staff or teaching staff. Staff regularly attend conferences and the College has initiated discussions with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) about identifying opportunities for pedagogic training. The College has its own in-house journal to which staff and students are encouraged to contribute.

2.17   The approach outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.18   The review team considered a range of evidence and met students and staff. Peer observation is seen by the College as an important component of its developmental activity for staff. Newly-appointed staff are observed by established staff with each being encouraged to share ideas and good practice. Collaborative working within the staffing body is also fostered to support the embedding of quality assurance policies and practice, identification of source material and the use of technology.

2.19   Students are complimentary about the level of support they receive from their tutors and the open-door approach so that they can seek advice or support from any member of staff. Students noted how teaching supported different learning styles enabling all students to contribute positively to their learning experience. Feedback to students enables them to be clear about the level they have achieved and why, as well as steps required to improve grades.

2.20   The College uses a combination of its annual monitoring process, external examiners' reports and student feedback to identify areas for improvement. An example of this is the College response to student feedback on the quality of resources in the College's library. This response led to an increase in the library stock, the replacement of College PCs and easier access to the College's librarian. It has also led to the development of the College's VLE, known as Desire2Learn, which students found easy to use and contained all the information they needed to support their learning.

2.21   While the College does not formally have a strategy on which to plan and develop its learning environment, it is, nonetheless evident that the current learning environment is fit for purpose and is effective in ensuring that the College has a learning environment that meets this Expectation. The level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement*

Findings

2.22   The College enables student development and achievement by a variety of formal and informal arrangements both inside and outside the classroom. Teaching staff use a range of teaching styles to maximise student progress and achievement. Students are also introduced to personal development planning which is developed using student diaries to enable students to reflect and plan their progress. Student support is also supplemented through the College's open-door policy and through the use of one-to-one personal tutor support. This enables the College to identify and respond quickly to issues that may prevent students from achieving their potential.

2.23   Student attendance is monitored carefully, and student handbooks specify a minimum attendance level. College staff are able to monitor student engagement through students' access and use of the College's VLE. The College is clear about the causal link between low or poor attendance, failure to submit work and overall student engagement. The College has deliberately included opportunities for students to gain transferable skills through curriculum design to build on the College's employability agenda.

2.24   The approach outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.25   Learning resources are monitored carefully and kept under review. The College aims to make available at least two copies of textbooks recommended in the module specifications of the new programme. Students are also encouraged to make use of the libraries of other theological colleges in addition to using the College's own resources. The College has recently taken out a subscription to an electronic library which provides students with access to thousands of books and journal articles. The College's virtual learning environment has been recently updated and is populated with learning materials for all programmes and students are provided with a guide to electronic resources accessible by links in the VLE. Student use of the VLE is monitored and reports on usage are made to the Board of Study.

2.26   The review team tested this Expectation through examining student handbooks, curriculum-related documents, VLE content and the minutes of relevant committee meetings. It also met senior staff, teaching and professional services staff, as well as students to assess the effectiveness of arrangements for student development and achievement.

2.27   Students were extremely complimentary about the College's mutually supportive and non-competitive learning environment. Students recognised and valued the use of peer learning and the way in which individual modules developed a range of transferable skills. They also noted how College staff focused on what students wanted to achieve through study and after graduation. As such the College's collaborative and personalised approach to student learning and achievement that enables students to develop their personal potential is seen as **good practice** and therefore the review team concludes that this 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

2.28   The College's handbook and website states that its mission is to provide 'the best opportunity for students who want a deeper understanding of Islam, its philosophy, and its law, in its right context and perspective'. The College aims to engage students with a higher range of academia and to create an inclusive environment that engages all students, both Muslims and non-Muslims from different cultures and backgrounds. The College engages its students as partners in a variety of formal and informal capacities. Formal engagement is maintained primarily through the College's support of the Student Council and its encouragement of students to act as representatives for their programmes. Informal engagement is delivered primarily through its College-wide activities programme, including its Monthly Lecture series, a student Awards Day, external residential trips (including the College's participation in a Muslim-Christian summer camp), and lunchtime socials.

2.29   The approach outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.30   A student submission was compiled by the Lead Student Representative with the support of the Student Council. The submission stated that 'the atmosphere at the College is welcoming and a warm environment for every background, language and faith. Here, the student-teacher relationship is more of a parent-child relationship emphasising the affection of teachers to such extent'. This was confirmed by the team in meetings.

2.31   The Student Council meets on a monthly basis and student representatives are also invited to join Academic Board meetings. Student feedback on courses is collected through surveys conducted at the end of each semester and via reports from student representatives. Student representatives for each programme are elected by a ballot of their respective cohort in the second week of semester one each academic year. The review team examined the effectiveness of the College's efforts to engage students by examining documentation including minutes of relevant committee meetings, student handbooks, and the outcomes of student feedback. The team also held meetings with students, support staff, teaching staff, senior staff, and the College Principal.

2.32   Student representatives confirmed that concerns raised through the Student Council in relation to library and computing provision had been met by the College over and above what they had asked for, and that they were treated as partners in this process. Additionally, students noted that the College has now begun a daily lunch service available to all students at a subsidised price of £1 per day. The team noted that this was regarded as particularly valuable to support part-time and mature students and those travelling long distances to attend the College.

2.33   The team found that the College's mission and values were shared and clearly articulated in all meetings and that the College takes a broad range of deliberate steps to engage all its students, both individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The review team identified the College's extensive range of approaches to student engagement that promotes confidence and a learning partnership as **good practice**. The Expectation is therefore met and the 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

2.34   The assessment of College programmes and procedures for the accreditation of prior learning (APL) operate in accordance with Middlesex University Regulations and policies set out in the College's Policies Handbook. Assessment at module level is approved at (re)validation and specified in the module narratives. All work at level 5 and above is double-marked internally and the marks are confirmed by the relevant external examiner. Written feedback is provided to students, normally within three to four weeks, which is supplemented by group and individual verbal feedback. Module grades are considered at internal Assessment Boards and confirmed at external Assessment Boards along with awards. A Registry Board deals with deferrals and extenuating circumstances.

2.35   These processes, if implemented rigorously, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.36   In testing the Expectation the review team looked at the University and College policies and procedures regarding assessment examples of module narratives, assessment feedback sheets, minutes of internal and external Assessment Boards, evidence of a staff development session and considered the student submissions. The team also spoke about assessment with senior and teaching staff, and students.

2.37   The College Policies Handbook contains a comprehensive section covering the key aspects of assessment with reference to the University's policies and regulations where appropriate, for example in relation to APL and academic misconduct. Programme handbooks are a key source of written information regarding aspects of assessment, including explanations of the range of assessment methods used, the purpose of formative and summative assessment, and deferral and extenuating circumstances request forms.

2.38   The College uses an appropriate variety of assessments including examinations, portfolios, presentations and group work, which external examiners confirm are effective in enabling students to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. Module narratives contain concise descriptions of assessments with students being given more detailed guidance in class.

2.39   Students reported that their marks and feedback were posted on the VLE and that written feedback was supplemented in class. They also explained that having asked the College to provide more effective feedback on examinations, they could now access all comments on examination papers and that the process was very transparent. The AMRs for 2014-15 and 2015-16, and the 2014 QAA review and follow-up review in 2016 refer to challenges regarding the timely return of work and provision of feedback to students. However, evidence from the student submission and discussions with students suggested that this had now been improved and that students were now satisfied with the College's processes for providing feedback.

2.40   The programme handbooks contain a set of generic assessment criteria that distinguish between the characteristics expected of work for each marking band.

The 2015-16 student submission suggested that there was a need for assessment criteria that were more specific than those in the student handbook. Similarly, a letter to the College from the University regarding the Foundation Year in Qur'anic Arabic in 2016 referred to the need for clear and unambiguous marking criteria. The review team also noted that the generic criteria do not distinguish between the expectations of work at different levels of the FHEQ from level 4 through to level 7 or for particular assignments. Although in their meeting with the review team students confirmed that they were now clear from the assessment criteria what is expected of them, the team took the view that some further differentiation of the criteria in relation to the level of study would have the potential to enhance the student experience. The team therefore **recommends** that the College develop grading criteria for each level of study, so that they appropriately reflect the FHEQ. The team also saw that the generic assessment criteria formed part of the assessment feedback sheet for students with the intention that the level of performance against the criteria would be clearly indicated. The review team saw a number of examples where this was not the case and the College explained that they had taken steps to rectify this and ensure their consistent use.

2.41   The review team saw evidence of staff development activities that support staff in their assessment practice and in some cases were provided in order to respond to specific issues encountered by the College.

2.42   External examiners have consistently confirmed the effective operation and conduct of Assessment Boards, and scrutiny of the minutes of internal and external Assessment Boards and Registry Boards by the review team confirm that they are robust and fit for purpose.

2.43   Based upon the evidence provided, the review team is able to confirm that the College's processes are operating effectively and are fit for purpose. The Expectation is therefore met with a moderate level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.44   The College has appointed external examiners for each of the programmes awarded by Middlesex University. The College identifies potential new external examiners and nominate them to Middlesex University. The University considers and approves nominations through its approval processes as outlined in the LQEH. External examiners approve all summative assessment and attend the External Assessment Board. At the Board, the respective external examiners provide an oral report which is followed up by a written report.

2.45   External examiner reports are considered by the Principal who responds to any issues and comments made by respective externals and these are also incorporated into the College's AMRs. These reports are sent to the University link tutor for further comment and response. The College's Academic Board is responsible for ensuring that action arising from external examiner reports is undertaken. The College posts copies of all external examiner reports on the College's VLE so that they are available to students.

2.46   The approach outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team examined the process for external examiner appointment, recent external examiners' reports as well as other documentation, which demonstrated how these reports had been addressed. It also considered how the College managed the recommendations made by external examiners and its impact on academic standards and learning opportunities.

2.47   The process for the nomination and approval of external examiners works well. As previously mentioned, external examiner reports are not formally considered through the College's governance structure. However, the external examiner system is effective. The College responds to issues raised by externals positively even when reports have been especially critical of aspects of the programmes offered. Again, this reflects the open and transparent way in which the College operates. External examiners have been invited to provide training and support to academic staff following concerns raised. This has resulted in a genuine close working relationship that has added value to the student experience.

2.48   The review team concludes on the basis of evidence provided that this 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

2.49   The annual monitoring and review processes are those of the University set out in the LQEH. Section 7 of the LQEH establishes the purpose of the annual monitoring and enhancement process and explains how this should operate for collaborative partners. The link tutors from the College and University jointly complete an AMR template and action plan for all of the College's provision. In addition, the College holds Board of Studies meetings each semester. The Board of Studies is a forum where student representatives and academic staff meet to monitor and discuss any issues related to the College's programmes. A full review and revalidation of programmes takes place within six years of their approval and is conducted in accordance with University procedures.

2.50   The College's engagement with the University's annual monitoring and periodic review processes and their own arrangements for Board of Studies meetings would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.51   To test the Expectation the review team scrutinised documentation including AMRs, the minutes of Board of Studies meetings, and the reports of the review and revalidation of courses. The team also discussed these processes with senior and teaching staff of the College, link tutors and students.

2.52   The AMRs viewed by the team identified a range of documentation and data, including external examiner reports, Board of Studies minutes, progression and achievement data, and assessment board minutes that were considered by the link tutors when compiling their report. Central to the AMR is a summary of the key developments over the previous year and the key themes and issues arising from the evidence. The examples seen by the review team were comprehensive and effective in identifying key areas that would need to be addressed.

2.53   The action table which follows on from the commentary is structured under a number of headings to ensure that consideration is given to all key aspects of the provision including curriculum development; learning and IT resources and student support; and the effectiveness of the management of collaborative links. The team was able to see how the actions identified would enhance the quality of student learning opportunities, for example through the improvement of library and computer facilities.

2.54   The joint completion of the AMR by the link tutors enables the University to work closely with the College to continuously monitor the College's programmes and enhance the quality of student learning opportunities.

2.55   At both undergraduate and master's level Boards of Study, students and programme leaders are able to report on and respond to any immediate issues facing the programmes. The meetings are well attended, and students reported that they found them a useful opportunity to provide feedback and that despite the large number of staff in attendance they were not concerned about expressing their views. The review team considered these to be an effective way in which to continuously monitor the College programmes.

2.56   The review team concludes that the processes for the annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes and the operation of the Boards of Study are effective. The Expectation is therefore 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

2.57   The College has a clear formal policy in place for students to make appeals and raise complaints. The formal process for student complaints and appeals is set out in the Islamic College Policies Handbook. More information and guidance support is also available from the Registry Office. The handbook sets out clear parameters for the complaint process. Students can expect to receive a response within 15 days, describing any measures taken or to be taken to resolve problems or concerns. In the case of anonymous complaints, feedback is provided to the student representatives.

2.58   The College follows Middlesex University Regulations for Appeals and if an academic appeal is not resolved to the student's satisfaction internally then the student has the right to approach the University link tutor. The College keeps a record of all complaints activated within the academic year, and these are submitted to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.59   The approach outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.60   The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's procedures for handling student complaints by examining documentation for all complaints raised in the previous two academic years, of which there were two. The two complaints were cross-checked with the Policies Handbook, student handbooks, and minutes from Academic Board meetings. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, support staff, and students. Students met by the team confirmed their awareness of the formal procedures in place for complaints and appeals, as well as the availability of informal guidance from support staff.

2.61   The team concludes, therefore, that the College meets its obligations to implement and maintain appropriate procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints and that these procedures are regarded as fair, accessible and timely. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.62   The College does not currently deliver learning opportunities with other organisations. Students do not undertake placements or work-based learning as integral components of their programme. However, the College is committed to playing an active and positive role in the community and as such it undertakes a number of outreach activities, for example, the organisation and attendance at a joint Christian-Muslim summer camp in Oxford. It has also invited local schools to participate in Iftar celebrations at the College. The College ensures a spirit of community through, for example, bring and share meals, contributions to the in-house journals and a recent art exhibition.

2.63   The review team tested the relevance of the Expectation by talking to staff and students and by considering documentation provided.

2.64   The review team confirms that this Expectation has limited relevance to the current higher education provision at the College. However, the arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with community organisations enrich the student experience and are implemented securely and managed effectively. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.65   The College does not currently award 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

2.66   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.

2.67   All the Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk apart from Expectation B6 which is judged a moderate risk.

2.68   The review team identified good practice in the inclusive and supportive learning environment that is embedded throughout the College to support the College mission and values, the collaborative and personalised approach to student learning and achievement that enables students to develop their personal potential and the extensive range of approaches to student engagement that promotes confidence and a learning partnership.

2.69   However, the review team also recommended that the College should develop grading criteria for each level of study, so that they appropriately reflect the FHEQ.

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 provides an effective and extensive distribution of information about its provision of learning opportunities for current and prospective students, staff, as well as external stakeholders, including the local community. The College offers a website for external and internal use. The College also has a VLE, which is available to students and staff via a web browser and as a mobile application. The College provides prospectuses for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Programme handbooks are available to students online and in hard copy.

3.2 All advertising materials, including prospectuses, are approved by Middlesex University before publication. The College has a Marketing Officer who is responsible for managing the University link and ensuring that all information is up to date. The College aims to attract prospective students by distributing information about its learning opportunities at external conferences and by hosting a variety of outreach events that engage the community. The College also makes use of social media, with active Twitter and Facebook accounts that provide information about their events so that external stakeholders can engage with the various learning opportunities offered by the College.

3.3 The approach outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.4 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's provision of information by exploring the availability and accuracy of the information provided on its website, on the VLE, in the prospectuses, and in the programme handbooks. The review team conducted meetings with students, support staff, teaching staff, and senior College staff to consider how the provision of information is organised, accessible, and fit for purpose.

3.5 Students confirmed that information was clear, thorough, and helpful in the admissions process, at interview, and when they made enquiries. Students are fully aware of the learning opportunities available to them as well as the expectations attached to this provision. Students also reported that information provided on the VLE was comprehensive and helpful. Recent updates made to the VLE by the College have made information more accessible and user-friendly, including the VLE app, which was well received by students.

3.6 Information viewed by the team was largely accurate and up to date. The College aims to update prospectus information regularly, but this has yet to be embedded in a formal procedure that would secure oversight of all information. To this end, the team **recommends** that the College formalise a process of editorial oversight that secures the clarity and uniformity of information across all platforms. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.8   The review team scrutinised a range of documentation (both published in hard copy and electronic versions) made available to prospective, current and former students, and other stakeholders.

3.9   Overall, the review team found that the College has considered the formal requirements of Expectation C and has ensured that it can demonstrate its compliance with the Expectation. However, the review team recommends that the College formalise a process of editorial oversight that secures the accuracy of information across all platforms.

3.10   The 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 states that they collect information from students and other stakeholders to inform strategic improvements in the quality of students' learning experiences. These improvements are developed through a project-based approach. Two projects cited in the College's documentation related to supporting students' development of transliteration skills and referencing skills through enhancements to their Research Methodology modules. Feedback from students is used by the Head of Education to evaluate the impact of these projects.

4.2   This project-based approach to enhancement has the capacity to meet the Expectation.

4.3   The review team examined evidence from the College's website and VLE and a range of documents including a student research journal. The team also gained evidence of the College's enhancement activities from meetings with senior, teaching and professional services staff, the University link tutor and students.

4.4   Although the College does not have a separate enhancement policy and had only cited two closely related examples of enhancement projects within their documents, it was clear from evidence provided during the review visit that there were many more examples where deliberate steps had been taken to initiate a wide range of projects to enhance the students' learning opportunities. These include examples of projects which are curricular and extracurricular, academic and non-academic, and both College and community outreach focused.

4.5   Academic staff and students spoke enthusiastically about a joint project with a College in Oxford where they were able to attend a Muslim-Christian interfaith summer school. The next stage in the development of this project was for the College to seek accreditation of this by the University. Students were also encouraged to contribute to an International Food Day which was used as an opportunity to attract alumni and provide a forum for considering issues related to employability.

4.6   The review team was provided with a copy of a high quality in-house journal that was used to showcase examples of student work and thus disseminate good practice. The team also heard that students considered the approach of using daily timetabled Mbahatha group meetings to reinforce their learning to be hugely beneficial. These timetabled sessions encourage students to support one another in their learning and help them to clarify their understanding.

4.7   Other examples of enhancement projects highlighted by staff demonstrated the important outreach activity and community engagement being carried out by the College. These included an 'Iftar' (breaking of the fast) event at the end of Ramadan at which Religious Studies/Education teachers and pupils from local schools and colleges were invited into the College for an Islamic experience day. A successful Islamic Art exhibition which was open to the public also provided the opportunity for the College to host school visits.

4.8   The review team noted the numerous steps taken by the College to enhance the student experience and applaud the combination of College and community outreach initiatives that enhance the student learning opportunities as **good practice**. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9   In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of learning opportunities the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.10   The review team found that the College is particularly effective in its systematic enhancement of student learning opportunities. In particular, the team identified the combination of College and community outreach initiatives that enhance the student learning opportunities as good practice.

4.11   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.