



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Kensington Education Foundation Ltd t/a Kensington College of Business

October 2016

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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 Kensington Education Foundation Ltd t/a Kensington College of Business. The review took place from 25 to 27 October 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Miss Maxina Butler-Holmes
- Mr Simeon London
- Miss Sarah Bennett (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Kensington Education Foundation Ltd t/a Kensington College of Business and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)¹ setting out what all UK [higher education providers](#) expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (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.

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Kensington Education Foundation Ltd t/a Kensington College of Business.

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

Good practice

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

- the enhanced Pearson provision which provides a dynamic and integrated model for continuous student learning and development (Expectations B3, B1, B4 and B6)
- the highly effective practices and systems that facilitate the coherent transition and academic progression of students within and between pathways (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

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

By March 2017:

- ensure student membership on deliberative committee structures at all levels (Expectation B5)
- ensure that students are fully informed of the external examiner role and bring to their attention the availability of external examiner reports (Expectation B7).

By July 2017:

- ensure that minutes of all deliberative meetings and reports comprehensively and systematically record decisions and actions to promote effective planning (Expectation A3.3 and Enhancement)
- specify ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all information is fit-for-purpose and trustworthy and that robust procedures are consistently implemented and regularly reviewed (Expectation C).

By November 2017:

- ensure that there are appropriate systems in place to engage all students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (Expectations B5 and B8)
- further develop the processes for programme monitoring to ensure critical analysis and evaluation, leading to actions which are effectively tracked through deliberative structures (Expectations B8 and A3.3)
- further develop processes to ensure the identification, integration and evaluation of enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned manner at provider level (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Kensington Education Foundation Ltd t/a Kensington College of Business is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the introduction of the annual monitoring report, which provides institutional oversight (Expectation A3.3)
- the introduction of the revised and strengthened terms of reference for Academic Board in promoting quality enhancement on a College-wide basis (Expectation A3.3).

Financial sustainability, management and governance

Kensington Education Foundation Ltd t/a Kensington College of Business satisfactorily completed the financial sustainability, management and governance check. Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

About the College of Business

Kensington College of Business (the College) was established in 1982 as a not-for-profit organisation in South Kensington, moving to its present location in Holborn in 2000. Its mission is 'to provide Higher Education opportunities within the framework of excellence' while 'placing students at the heart of the education experience' and 'working in partnership with highly qualified and dedicated staff' focusing on 'providing a friendly multicultural environment'.

To fulfil its mission, the College has, over the years, expanded its range of courses and grown its student numbers. In its early years the College offered professional business qualifications in accountancy, banking and corporate governance, management, and marketing. During the 1990s it expanded its offer to include franchised university degree programmes firstly with University of London, University of Glamorgan, and subsequently University of Wales and Glyndŵr University. In 2014 the College entered into partnership with the University of Chester, offering a range of validated programmes, and Pearson Edexcel to deliver Higher National programmes in business. The College, as a recognised provider, has delivered programmes on behalf of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators since 1986.

At the time of the review the College had 404 students, of whom 274 were full-time and 130 were part-time.

There are 102 students currently studying on University of Chester undergraduate programmes, which commenced in September 2015. Students are currently being recruited to the University of Chester MBA Master of Business Administration programme to start in January 2017. A further programme planned for delivery in January 2017, MSc Information Systems, is currently being reviewed by the University of Chester and will not be delivered at any partner institutions.

The number of students studying on the Higher National programmes is 171.

The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators students are all part-time and in employment and in many cases are sponsored by their employers.

Although the partnership with University of Wales has ended, one student, following appeal, still has to complete the BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance.

There are currently 30 academic staff (approximately 15 full-time equivalents).

At the time of the review the College offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding bodies and organisations.

University of Chester

- BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance (8)
- BA (Hons) Business Management (73)
- BSc (Hons) Computer Science (12)
- LLB Law with Business (9).

Pearson Edexcel

- Higher National Diploma in Business (171).

Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA)

- Chartered Secretaries Qualifying Scheme (90)
- Certificate in Company Secretarial Practice (40).

Major changes since the last QAA review

The College has overseen a number of developments since its 2012 Review for Educational Oversight, not least the changes in its awarding body and awarding organisation partners. At the time of the 2012 review the College offered provision on behalf of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, NCFE, University of London and University of Wales.

Over the intervening period the College gained approval from Glyndŵr University to deliver franchised undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in business and computing and subsequently, with effect from October 2014, to deliver validated programmes with the University of Chester, with teaching starting in September 2015 on some undergraduate programmes once the Glyndŵr programmes had been closed. Approval was obtained from Pearson in 2014 to deliver Higher Nationals in Business and delivery commenced in August of that year.

Key challenges

The College states in its documentation that the main challenge going forward is that of student recruitment. Increasingly, Government policy around non-EU student entry to study in the UK has had an adverse effect on the recruitment of international students. This has been exacerbated by the Government abolishing Post-Study Work Visas and removing the ability for students who study at an alternative provider to undertake part-time work.

The extent to which recommendations from the Review for Educational Oversight 2012 have been addressed

The Review for Educational Oversight undertaken by QAA in 2012 concluded that confidence could be placed in the management of responsibilities for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities and that reliance could be placed in the accuracy and completeness of information.

In 2012 the review team identified seven areas of good practice and made five recommendations. Subsequent monitoring visits in 2013, 2014 and 2015 confirmed that the College had made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision.

The 2012 review team identified the internal moderation on NCFE courses to be a feature of good practice. While NCFE courses are no longer run at the College, the current review team has identified similar good practice in respect of the Pearson provision. The College has built on the remaining good practice points identified. It has continued to engage with the Quality Code and remains strong in supporting students through formative feedback, study skills modules and by introducing a bridging programme to aid transitions. There are mechanisms in place to collect student feedback and to respond to issues raised, with student representation on the Academic Board and Board of Trustees. Student representatives are invited to meet with staff at monthly staff-student committee meetings. However, student representatives are not formally identified as committee members in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee terms of reference.

The 2012 review team made advisable recommendations in relation to strengthening the formal recording of business by the Academic Board and related committees, and to ensuring that action plans include measurable targets set with realistic dates for achievement. While there is evidence that some progress has been made, the current review team found that the minutes of some meetings are very brief and descriptive and lack critical evaluation, and that some inconsistency is evident in the updating of action columns, which require the completion of impact on students and measurable targets. Therefore, further recommendations have been made around ensuring that minutes of all deliberative meetings and reports comprehensively and systematically record decisions and action, and around comprehensive reporting and tracking of actions through deliberative structures.

A further advisable recommendation was that the College ensures that all published information is consistent and accurate in all media, and while there is evidence that the College has put processes and procedures in place, the current review team found inconsistencies that have led to a further recommendation in this area.

Explanation of the findings

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

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

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

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* are met by:

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

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

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

d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

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

Findings

1.1 The College currently offers a range of qualifications on behalf of one awarding body, University of Chester (UoC), and two awarding organisations, the Institute of Chartered Secretaries (ICSA) and Pearson. The College works with its awarding body and organisations in the approval, monitoring and review of its higher education programmes, the responsibilities for which are detailed within individual partnership agreements. Awarding partners set the standards of the College's programmes through the application of their own academic frameworks and regulations.

1.2 The College's adherence to the policies and procedures of the awarding body and the awarding organisations would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team tested this Expectation through a review of partnership agreements, programme and module specifications, external examiners' reports, and through meetings with staff.

1.4 The University programmes are aligned to the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements at subject level, as are programme and module specifications produced by the College. The University formal validation approval process provides assurance of academic standards for validated courses.

1.5 The College delivers two programmes on behalf of ICSA on an external basis as a registered provider. The Certificate in Company Secretarial Practice (CCSP) is delivered as a validated programme, while the Chartered Secretaries Qualifying Scheme (CSQS) is delivered under a franchise agreement. The ICSA uses the FHEQ as an external reference point for the standards and level of these awards. The CCSP is set at level 4 in the UK Higher Education Framework, equivalent to the first year of a UK undergraduate degree, is vocationally focused, and aligns to industry practice expectations. The CSQS is aligned to levels 6 and 7 and meets ICSA's professional standards.

1.6 The College also delivers Higher National qualifications in Business on behalf of Pearson, which are referenced to the Qualifications and Credit Framework for academic level and standard. Pearson maintains responsibility for the approval of Higher National awards although the College can obtain approval for modifications to programmes. Initial approval is sought through the College's internal approval process. Proposals are scrutinised by the Quality and Enhancement Committee (QAC) and, if approved, are then subject to validation by Pearson.

1.7 The review team found that external examiners confirmed that programme assessments are appropriate for the relevant level of the FHEQ. Programme specifications and student handbooks are explicitly referenced to the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, and learning outcomes are clearly defined by the programme and module specifications.

1.8 The awarding body and organisations retain ultimate responsibility for allocating each qualification to the appropriate level of the FHEQ and for considering subject benchmarks and other relevant frameworks. The partnership between the College and its awarding body and organisations works effectively and staff are aware of their responsibilities in adhering to those agreements. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.9 The partnership agreement with each awarding body or organisation requires the College to work within the academic frameworks provided by the respective partner's academic regulations. The responsibilities of the College and the awarding body and organisations are set out in the agreements between the College and its three partners, and confirmed within the responsibilities checklist, which identifies both individual and shared responsibilities.

1.10 The ICSA Operating Agreement, UoC Quality and Standards Manual, and Pearson Business Specification document provide comprehensive regulatory guidance for the College, to which it adheres.

1.11 The effective delivery of the awarding partners' academic frameworks is underpinned by the College's academic governance structure and ensures that regulations are followed appropriately.

1.12 Academic regulations are made available to students through the College's virtual learning environment (VLE), awarding body portals and in student handbooks.

1.13 The awarding partners' academic frameworks and supporting processes, and the College higher education oversight systems and processes, would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

1.14 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing documentation, through meetings with senior staff, academic staff and students, and by reviewing the College's processes and procedures.

1.15 The ICSA is responsible for the design, content, setting and marking of the CSQS programme and provides extensive additional support and documentation to help facilitate delivery. For the CCSP programme, although the College takes responsibility for module specifications and the setting and marking of assessments, the ICSA provides oversight and monitoring of assessment standards.

1.16 Summative assessments for franchised UoC programmes are designed and moderated by the University while the College takes responsibility for formative assessments. Responsibility for marking is shared, moderated by the University and externally examined. Standards of assessment between the College and awarding body are consistent and student performance aligns with UoC expectations.

1.17 Validated UoC programme assessments are designed by the College, but undergo formal University moderation and external examiner review prior to publication. Review and confirmation of student grades takes place through a series of assessment boards, with final confirmation of exit awards taking place at the Award Assessment Board before they are then issued to students by the University.

1.18 Assessments for the Higher National qualifications are written and internally verified by the College and formally approved by Pearson prior to publication. Internal Assessment

Boards provide an effective mechanism for the College to monitor and reflect on student performance.

1.19 Oversight of academic standards and the awarding of academic credit is administered through the College's committee structure.

1.20 The review team is satisfied that the College adheres to the frameworks and regulations of its awarding body and organisations. Therefore, the review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.21 UoC and Pearson have delegated responsibility to the College to maintain definitive records of each programme. Information regarding programme specifications is available on the student VLE, in course handbooks, and on the website of each awarding body and organisation.

1.22 Pearson designs the qualification and module specifications for their programmes. Pearson HND and HNC programme specifications are the responsibility of the College, and can be modified to meet the particular local needs of the cohort.

1.23 The ICSA CSQS programme is designed by the awarding organisation. Module study manuals cover all areas of the syllabus and staff at review confirmed the programme equivalence to level 4 on the FHEQ. While the College is responsible for providing successful participants with an ICSA certificate of completion, definitive records of each qualification are maintained by the ICSA.

1.24 Programme and module specifications for ICSA's CCSP course are detailed within the ICSA operating agreement, syllabus and course handbook. Responsibility for producing module specifications is delegated to the College by the ICSA, and is outlined within the operating agreement. The programme is subject to course review every five years and yearly review by the ICSA Course Board to ensure currency of information.

1.25 The programme specifications are supported by information within the programme handbooks, module handbooks, module descriptors, and assessment schedules. This enables staff and students to access a record of the programmes and qualifications offered by the College.

1.26 The College's approach to the production, approval, monitoring and amendment of definitive programme information is sufficient to enable this Expectation to be met.

1.27 In testing the Expectation, the review team examined evidence relating to records of individual programmes and qualifications, including programme specifications, student handbooks, assessment descriptors and collaborative agreements relating to the College and partner organisations.

1.28 Evidence reviewed by the review team shows these processes to be effective in practice. There are suitable procedures for modification and review of programmes. Staff can make changes to the module descriptors of UoC programmes, but require approval to alter module content. Staff gave an example of BSc Computer Science modules which, given University approval, can be varied by up to 30 per cent.

1.29 Any changes to ICSA assessments or to the module descriptors are approved in consultation between the College and the awarding organisation.

1.30 To make changes to Pearson programmes staff must complete programme modification forms, which are reviewed by the QAC and Academic Board prior to being

submitted to Pearson. An example of such an adjustment was provided, where the College applied to add optional Pearson accredited 'Study and Communication Skills for Business' QCF units, with a view to widening student participation.

1.31 All students met by the review team are aware of which awarding body or organisation awards their qualification, and how and where to find assessment schedules, including the criteria they are assessed against. Details of programmes and assessment schedules are communicated to students both by teaching staff and within course and programme handbooks.

1.32 The review team found that the College maintains definitive records of each programme and qualification that they deliver, including any modifications, which serve as a robust foundation for programme delivery and assessment. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is 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

1.33 The College's awarding body and awarding organisations are responsible for the setting of academic standards and approval of programmes.

1.34 Although the design of the ICSA CSQS programme is prescribed, the College played an active role in the development of the original CCSP programme, which was designed in consultation with employers and approved by the ICSA. The awarding organisation confirmed the alignment of the CCSP programme with FHEQ level 4 during the last quinquennial review. The quinquennial review presented the opportunity to propose changes to the learning outcomes and assessment strategy for the qualification.

1.35 Pearson maintains responsibility for the approval of Higher National awards and the College informs the awarding organisation of the chosen units within the rules of combination. Market research was conducted to determine the most appropriate units prior to the Pearson approval in 2014.

1.36 The collaborative agreement with the UoC defines each party's responsibilities and the College follows the policies and procedures for programme approval as articulated in the University's Quality and Standards Manual. These approaches, following the University's course approval procedure, were observed for the approval of the degree programmes in 2013. The College Quality Assurance Manual states that programme approval decisions are informed by the 'full consideration of academic standards and the appropriateness of learning opportunities' as proposals progress through the QAC and Academic Board prior to external approvals processes.

1.37 The oversight provided by these external processes enables the College to ensure that academic standards are set at an appropriate level. The College, through the operation of its QAC and Academic Board, provides the framework for the systematic maintenance of the processes for approval of taught programmes.

1.38 The processes and procedures of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.39 The review team tested the effectiveness of these processes and procedures by examining relevant University and awarding organisation policies, partnership agreements, programme approval reports and minutes of meetings. The review team also met with the Principal, senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.40 The review team found that, overall, the processes for programme approval work effectively to comply with the relevant academic frameworks and regulations. In addition to the 2015 Review for Educational Oversight (REO) monitoring visit report, noting that staff made use of external reference points during the design, development and approval of the validated courses with UoC, the review team evidenced active involvement by several members of staff in preparation for programme approvals and validation events with awarding partners. For example, the BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance, previously

validated by the University of Wales, was redeveloped and approved through UoC's regulatory framework. The UoC validating panel commended the comprehensive programme documentation. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of how the processes work through both the College and University deliberative structures.

1.41 The validation report produced by UoC's Academic Quality and Standards division recognised the collaborative approach taken towards the design and approval of some undergraduate modules for which the College staff have a devolved responsibility. Although the module descriptors are designed by the University, both the LLB Law with Business and BSc Computer Science programmes provide this localised opportunity. In preparation for the academic partnership, the College completed a proposal that mapped the HND Business units against the learning outcomes and module descriptors at levels 4 and 5 of the bachelor's degree to ensure appropriate alignment to enable student progression to the next level of study.

1.42 The review team found the College's approach towards academic planning aspects beyond the initial business case to be informal. For example, minutes of meetings are very brief and 'do not always fully convey the content and nature of decisions', an observation made by the original REO team in 2012. The standard Pearson documents are completed for approval by the awarding organisation; however, there is no written evidence of the presentation of an academic case through the deliberative structures. As acknowledged under Expectation B1 (and other expectations), the College has adopted a proactive approach towards the ongoing design of Higher National programmes through the inclusion of Study Skills and Employability units.

1.43 Within the context of working with partner institutions, and the overarching academic frameworks partners provide to meet the threshold standards for the qualifications that they award, the review team concludes that the College is fulfilling its responsibilities for programme approval. The College works closely and effectively with its awarding partners to ensure that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.44 The College relies on the academic frameworks of its awarding partners for ensuring the validity of assessment. The partnership agreement with UoC sets out the mutual responsibilities in relation to assessment and the achievement of learning outcomes.

1.45 Assessment strategies and grading criteria are determined by the awarding body. External examiners attend assessment boards and their feedback informs the annual monitoring processes across the provision. There is a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which reflects the College's commitment to formative feedback in maximising student achievement and to ensuring that the design of assessment is 'transparent and fair'.

1.46 The programme specifications for the University-validated awards set out the assessment strategies to enable students to achieve module and programme-level intended learning outcomes. Programme handbooks and module specifications relate assessment requirements to the achievement of learning outcomes and provide clear reference to the academic regulations along with guidance relating to academic conduct and practice. Subject-level staff are involved in assessment processes through their engagement with peers at moderation meetings. Assessment decisions are formally confirmed at the University's module, programme and awards-level assessment boards.

1.47 For Pearson programmes, the College relies on the awarding organisation's generic guidance documentation. It uses the BTEC Centre Guide for Assessment and Standards Verification as its central reference point and produces a programme specification to reflect the College context. Standardisation and the internal verification of assessment takes place as required by Pearson, with the implementation being overseen by the relevant Programme Leader.

1.48 For the ICSA provision, the CSQC module learning outcomes are formally assessed through external examinations. For the CCSP modules staff are responsible for setting the examination assessments, which are approved by an external moderator. Module study manuals are produced, which include past examination papers and benchmark national results.

1.49 These frameworks and approaches ensure that the design, approval and monitoring of assessment satisfy appropriate academic standards, and would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.50 The review team tested the effectiveness of the assessment arrangements through the examination of minutes of meetings, external examiner reports and programme handbooks. The review team also held meetings with teaching staff, senior staff, support staff and students.

1.51 The evidence reviewed showed the policies and procedures to be effective in practice. Teaching staff involved with UoC provision produce some assessment briefs which are approved by the UoC Link Tutor, and all participate in moderation meetings and events, which ensure alignment with the appropriate levels and confirm the volume of assessment. During the first year of the UoC partnership all scripts were second marked. This is planned to become a representative sample once College staff are confirmed as understanding the University's expectations.

1.52 The College's administrative staff play a central role in uploading the College-devised assignment briefs for approval. Staff spoke enthusiastically of their experiences of attending conference sessions delivered by University staff, which had provided advice and guidance on assessment practices and confirmed their understanding of levelness. Students whom the review team met confirmed that they understood the requirements of assessment at both levels 5 and 6. The review team also heard from students who had progressed from Higher Nationals to degree programmes as to how they had been prepared for assessment at FHEQ levels 5 and 6 through the Strategic Management bridging course.

1.53 Assignment briefs are scrutinised by Pearson's external examiners and appropriate levels of assessment are confirmed through external examiner reports, after mid-year sampling, and at the annual visits to the College. Internal confirmation of standards of assessment is the responsibility of the internal verifier. The College has acted on an essential action stipulated by Pearson to clarify the internal verifier role and to distinguish internal verification from second marking. There is an administrator role specifically designated for the Pearson provision, which acts as the conduit for the collation of assignment briefs and the internal verification procedure.

1.54 The College uses standardised documentation for assignment briefs and recording of assessment decisions. These are scrutinised and approved by external examiners, who confirm the achievement of threshold standards. The review team heard that discussions on assessment performance take place during the weekly QAC meetings.

1.55 Overall, the team concludes that there is a clear view of the stages of the assessment cycle and effective academic and administrative relationships between the College and its awarding partners.

1.56 The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for the award of credit and qualifications. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.57 The College's agreements with its awarding body and organisations define the responsibilities of both parties for monitoring and review. The College has not yet been the subject of any periodic reviews with UoC; however, the quinquennial review is scheduled for 2018. The College does not have an independent internal periodic review process. The Academic Board has responsibility for the oversight of academic standards and quality, and from September 2016 has formally approved an institutional-level annual monitoring report and action plan. The institutional report, covering all of UoC, ICSA and Pearson programmes, was introduced following the QAA monitoring visit in October 2015 in order to ensure effective oversight of the provision. The report is considered by the Board of Directors and monitored through Academic Board meetings. The QAC provides operational-level oversight through its weekly meetings.

1.58 The Quality Cycle summarises the sources of evidence and reporting lines for the academic year to ensure that the processes for monitoring and review are implemented. UoC schedules an academic calendar and there is a close relationship between staff in the administrative functions that ensures that key dates are met.

1.59 For the UoC provision an annual monitoring report is submitted for each programme, which is discussed with the designated University Link Tutor. At the time of the review, the College had just completed its first report and there had been no feedback from the University. For the Pearson programmes, the College completes and submits the academic management review template, collating feedback from staff and students and the external examiner. In line with the College's decision to introduce annual programme reporting for all of the provision, the first report had been produced for the Pearson programmes. There is no requirement for institutional reporting to the ICSA; however, the College submits module leader reports and has used the annual monitoring reporting format, which will be considered through the Academic Board.

1.60 These arrangements provide the institutional framework for monitoring and review. The College's own processes and its adherence to those of its awarding body and awarding organisations enable it to meet the Expectation.

1.61 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements for the monitoring and review of its higher education provision through the reading of documentation including the annual reports and minutes of meetings. The review team also met with the Principal, the Chair of the Board, students, senior and teaching staff.

1.62 Following the 2015 REO report, the College recognised that a clearer delineation between the Board of Directors and Academic Board was required, leading to the terms of reference for Academic Board being strengthened for September 2016. The loci of responsibility are emerging, but it is recognised that aspects such as the resourcing implications arising from the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy need to be referred to the Board of Directors.

1.63 The expanded membership of Academic Board includes key administrative staff, and the review team heard how this has increased their understanding of the annual programme reporting process.

1.64 Student representation at the newly constituted Academic Board is clearly stated within the Board's terms of reference. Although the Lead Student Representative for the Higher Education Review attended the latest Academic Board meeting, the review team confirmed that until recently students have not been formal members of the Academic Board. The intention is that in the future three student representatives would sit as members. Minutes of meetings are, however, sent to student representatives.

1.65 The review team **affirms** the introduction of the revised and strengthened terms of reference for Academic Board in promoting quality enhancement on a College-wide basis.

1.66 The QAC, chaired by the Principal, meets weekly. Each month one meeting functions as a Staff-Student Committee meeting. Students, however, are not formal members of the QAC. The QAC presents an operational forum for discussions on quality assurance, curriculum development, teaching and learning, the sharing of good practice and University and awarding organisation partnerships, which staff value and see as providing the ongoing assurance of standards. The review team heard that, following the ongoing QAA annual monitoring reports, a more formalised approach was being taken towards the conduct and recording of meetings, through identifying staff responsible for carrying out actions that are carried forward until completion, being updated by the administrator. This contributes to the recommendation made under Expectation B8 that the College further develops the processes for programme monitoring to ensure critical analysis and evaluation, leading to actions that are effectively tracked through deliberative structures.

1.67 There is emerging evidence of an institutional development plan, informed by programme-level reports, a revised version of which was presented to the review team during the visit. Senior staff expressed the view that collating all data sources and information in one place strengthened institutional oversight. The review team **affirms** the introduction of the annual monitoring report, which provides institutional oversight.

1.68 The minutes of some meetings are very brief and lack critical evaluation. The early examples of action plans made available to the review team, however, provide some evidence of the College continuing, following on from the 2015 REO monitoring visit, to address the need for a more robust approach to enable effective monitoring. Action plans do not consistently show analysis of actions and effective monitoring of progress. The review team **recommends**, therefore, that the College ensures that the minutes of all deliberative meetings and reports comprehensively and systematically record decisions and actions to promote effective planning.

1.69 The review team found that, in the main, practices for programme monitoring and review work effectively. The evidence from documentation and meetings show that, overall, the College is managing its responsibilities for monitoring and reviewing its higher education programme and is operating in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners. The review team has affirmed the steps taken by the College but also makes a recommendation in relation to quality assurance procedures, which while being broadly adequate have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied. The Expectation is therefore met but the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.70 The College's awarding body and organisations are responsible for ensuring external expertise in the setting of academic standards and for the appointment of external examiners and moderators. The College is responsible for maintaining the academic standards set by its awarding body and awarding organisations of the provision it delivers on their behalf, and in considering, evaluating and responding to external examiner feedback appropriately.

1.71 The arrangement for using external and independent expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.72 To test this Expectation the team evaluated external examiner reports, programme specifications, programme annual reports and other relevant documentation, and met with the Principal and senior staff.

1.73 The College has recently strengthened its management structure with the introduction of a Board of Trustees to advise the College on its strategic direction, policy, values and compliance with external regulatory frameworks. Members of the Board of Trustees are recruited for their experience of publicly funded higher and further education and have other relevant experience to support the activities of the College.

1.74 For all of the programmes at the College the awarding body or organisations appoint external examiners. External examiner reports are evaluated by programme teams and are used to inform annual programme monitoring and institutional review.

1.75 The review team found that the College's approach to the use of external expertise, strengthened by the introduction of the Board of Trustees, informs the evaluation and maintenance of academic standards and follows the awarding partners' requirements. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.76 In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook and took into consideration that the College's degree-awarding body and awarding organisations have ultimate responsibility for the setting of academic standards. A positive judgement in this area demonstrates that the College is aware of its responsibilities for maintaining those standards.

1.77 The College follows the requirements of the degree-awarding body and awarding organisations effectively to maintain academic standards. These processes are supported by the College's own internal procedures and guidance.

1.78 All seven of the Expectations in this area are met and all but one have a low level of associated risk. The Expectation under A3.3 is met with a moderate level of risk because, while quality assurance procedures are broadly adequate, they have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied. This is supported by one recommendation and two affirmations.

1.79 The recommendation is that the College ensures that minutes of all deliberative meetings and monitoring reports comprehensively and systematically record decisions and actions to promote effective planning, in order to strengthen oversight of provision and assure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

1.80 The review team has also affirmed the introduction of the annual monitoring report, which provides institutional oversight, and the introduction of the revised and strengthened terms of reference for Academic Board in promoting quality enhancement on a College-wide basis.

1.81 Notwithstanding the above, all of the Expectations in this area are met. The review team, therefore, concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the College on behalf of the UoC, Pearson and the ICSA **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 Programme approval processes are specified by the College's awarding partners, as described under Expectation A3.1 of this report, and the College follows these procedures, stating that the responsibility for programme design and approval is mainly led by its partners. The College's Academic Board provides oversight of the provision and considers plans for the development of programmes. In July 2016 the Board of Directors approved the introduction of a course approval and development procedure, which will result in discussion at the QAC of programme design and development before formal approval through Academic Board. For Pearson programmes, the College selects units from the subject specification publications, observing the Rules of Combination. A proposal to introduce Study Skills and Employability units into Higher National programmes was approved by Pearson in 2015. The quinquennial review, conducted by ICSA, presented the opportunity to propose changes to the CCSP programme, including to learning outcomes and assessments.

2.2 These systematic approaches would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team reviewed the processes in operation through examining minutes of meetings, validation and approval reports, and background documentation, minutes and terms of reference of key academic committees. In addition, the review team held meetings with the Principal, senior staff, teaching and support staff and students.

2.4 The review team found that awarding partners' processes are followed for the design and approval of new programmes. As part of the move towards the College's developing relationship with UoC, approvals were made following procedures laid down in the University's Quality and Standards Manual for the undergraduate degree and the MBA programmes. Programme team members were involved in the design of assessments for the Business Studies degree modules and the review team also heard an example of student feedback informing a change in programme design at modular level for Business Law.

2.5 The review team saw evidence of proposal documents produced in advance of UoC approval but not of the internal process for course approval through the new procedure. The new programmes, however, were discussed and approved through QAC. The original 'Course Approval and Development Procedure' document and earlier version of the College's Quality Manual had not presented a coherent view of the process. A revised document was made available at the review which offered further clarity. The review team heard that there were no immediate plans to develop new programmes and thus no evidence to show how this procedure was working in practice to strengthen the academic approvals process through the College's formal committee structures.

2.6 Initial planning activities were followed by the mapping of the Pearson HND units across to the learning outcomes of modules within the UoC degree programmes, to facilitate student progression. As noted under Expectation B3, the College's proactive and inclusive

approach towards redesigning the Higher National programmes through responding to student need, by providing a dynamic and integrated model for continuous learning and development, is **good practice**.

2.7 The review team explored the role of the QAC and Academic Board in leading programme development and approval processes. The College provided examples of business case proposals but no evidence of where robust academic discussions are planned for and approval takes place. Examination of the brief minutes of meetings reinforced the Review for Educational Oversight 2012 review team's finding that minutes 'do not fully convey the content and nature of decisions'.

2.8 Overall, the review team concludes that the College is discharging its responsibilities for the design, development and approval of programmes. The Expectation is 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 Recruitment, selection and admissions processes are supported by the College's Admissions and Registration Policy, which aims to select students who are most likely to complete their chosen programme, with staff promoting a shared understanding of their recruitment strategy through QAC meetings. Although the Admissions and Recruitment Policy is not made available to prospective students, recruitment procedures are outlined on the College website directing students to apply to the College or through the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

2.10 The policies and procedures in place allow the Expectation to be met.

2.11 The review team examined the effectiveness of policies and procedures to recruit students by accessing the College website, and by reading the Admissions and Registration Policy and other related documentation. The review team also discussed admissions, selection and recruitment with staff and students.

2.12 Information for prospective students can be found on the College website, where pages clearly detail the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered, entry requirements, course exit points and how to apply. At the time of the review visit the website contained some outdated information; this is further covered under Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision. Entry requirements for each programme are also outlined in each respective programme specification and prospectus. The College regularly takes part in promotional events such as University recruitment events, UCAS fairs and College open days. Prospective students can apply directly to the College or through UCAS. Students met by the review team stated that they had heard positive reports of the College through word-of-mouth recommendations. They appreciate the central location and flexible timetabling that allows them to fit work and family commitments around their studying.

2.13 Prospective applicants for Pearson and UoC programmes initially contact the Admissions Department. The College is responsible for handling first enquiries and registration for the ICOSA Certificate recruitment. CSQS applicants apply directly to ICOSA.

2.14 Admissions staff receive regular recruitment training to support them in their role. This includes an Information Day for UoC partner organisations which includes sessions on student engagement, quality assurance processes and registry procedures.

2.15 In accordance with UoC validation agreements, all prior qualifications provided by prospective students must be in English or interpreted by a certified translator. Qualifications are checked through UK NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre). Applicants without English GCSE or equivalent international English Language Testing Score (IELTS) are assessed using an online multiple choice English test and handwritten essay question. The College also offers English language support classes. Applicants are encouraged to disclose any disability or special educational need to the Admissions Office at the earliest opportunity.

2.16 Prior to being offered a place, prospective students are invited to an interview with admissions and academic staff. As there are no entry requirements, ICSA students are not interviewed. Interviewing students enables the motivation, suitability and commitment to study of applicants to be assessed, and allows staff to give prospective students other relevant information including that concerning Tier 4.

2.17 When progressing to UoC programmes, students' motivations are assessed again due to the transition from levels 4 and 5 to level 6. Students also described a bridging course offered by College staff to prepare College students for progression onto UoC programmes.

2.18 Decisions are conveyed to students in writing, highlighting what applicants need to do to accept or reject their offer. Applicants receiving an unsuccessful application letter and wishing to appeal or complain are invited to contact the College. These appeals and/or complaints are reviewed by the Registrar and relevant programme leader. If unsatisfied with the outcome, students can appeal to the Academic Board.

2.19 In the case of a change or significant alteration to a programme for which a student has applied, staff confirmed that the College would take steps to inform applicants about these changes, in writing, at the earliest opportunity and provide an alternative course if required.

2.20 Before commencing their studies students are provided with the student handbook and programme handbook, and undertake several induction courses covering, among others, Library services, Study Support and IT skills. The support that students can expect from the College, as well as what the College expects from students in terms of rules, regulations and policies, is made clear. Feedback from students at review confirmed that they had been very satisfied with the quality of the induction received.

2.21 The College takes steps to monitor, review and update their recruitment, selection and admissions processes annually through the annual monitoring review of the awarding body. The Academic Board and Board of Directors discuss and review recruitment processes, pass rate, progression and achievement data.

2.22 The review team concludes that the College has the appropriate processes and policies in place, supported by well trained admissions staff, to allow for the fair and transparent recruitment, selection and admission of students. Students at the review visit gave very positive reports when describing their own experiences of recruitment and admission. Therefore this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.23 The College sets out its approach to enhancement of its learning and teaching in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which promotes a student-centred approach to teaching, learning and assessment. This approach is facilitated through the College's deliberative structure, which enables student participation at programme level and provides a flexible and adaptive approach to student learning needs.

2.24 The College has a number of processes in place to review the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, including student feedback surveys, peer review, external examiner reports, and module, programme and institutional self-evaluation reports.

2.25 The College's governance strategy, deliberative structure and feedback mechanisms that support the review and enhancement of the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.26 The review team tested the College's approach to the review and enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices by considering committee minutes, external examiners' reports and other sources of feedback, along with annual reports, and through meetings with relevant academic staff and students.

2.27 The QAC is the main cross-College operational review committee and meets on a weekly basis, enabling it to respond promptly to operational and student issues. Student issues are also discussed at the monthly Staff-Student Committee meetings that take place alongside the QAC. Students identify these meetings as providing a valued forum for discussion.

2.28 The College ensures that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed. Recruitment, probation, peer observation, student feedback and appraisal processes provide a coherent mechanism for ensuring that faculty are appropriately qualified, supported and developed.

2.29 The College has taken positive action to respond to teaching and learning requirements within specific programmes through the development and delivery of training courses for staff, and has institutional membership of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) to support staff development.

2.30 The College encourages a reflective approach to staff development. Staff make use of a variety of sources to inform their practice, including individual teaching observation and staff appraisal, which requires teaching staff to be observed at least once a year. This is extended through the evaluation of student feedback and is subsequently applied to inform delivery through Module Reviews.

2.31 Feedback on teaching and learning is supplemented by student and lecturer module reports and student module and programme feedback reports.

2.32 Students reported that the standard and quality of teaching meets their expectations. They confirmed that teaching staff are approachable and that staff operate an open-door policy, which they greatly value. Students are also clear who to approach for both academic and personal matters. The Principal is also available to all students. Students appreciate studying with peers from diverse backgrounds and reported that this enriches their learning experience.

2.33 Reasonable adjustments for students with special educational need, individual requirements or learning disability are specified in the student handbook, detailing the support available to them, and providing students with an equal opportunity to achieve. Methods of learning and teaching are set out within programme and module specifications, including lectures, seminars, supervised practical workshops, IT-based learning, guided reading and work-based learning.

2.34 The College has taken a responsive approach to student feedback and learning needs. Following evaluation of student performance data and feedback from students, external examiners and staff, the College introduced a series of changes to enhance and support student development and strengthen student progression. These included the introduction of non credit-bearing study skills support classes across all programmes, and, following the mapping of Higher National provision against UoC BA programmes, new credit-bearing study skills units within the HNC/HND programmes, which prepare students for employment and further education at an undergraduate level. Students and staff confirmed the value of the study skills modules in supporting and developing students' learning, particularly for returning learners. The enhanced Pearson provision, which provides a dynamic and integrated model for continuous student learning and development, is a feature of **good practice**.

2.35 The methods in place at the College to review learning and teaching opportunities, and staff development activities, and the College's focus on supporting students to learn, ensure an effective basis for learning and teaching. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.36 The College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy defines its commitment to student development, with the aim that students become confident individuals with skills and attributes valued by students, employers and the community and become lifelong learners.

2.37 Induction informs students of relevant policies and procedures effectively and alerts them to the regular opportunities they have to access academic and pastoral support. Formal and informal learning opportunities for students, which are provided to help them develop and progress academically, personally and professionally, are embedded across the provision.

2.38 An appropriate range of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating processes and procedures and resources are routinely employed, including student feedback and annual monitoring and review.

2.39 The design and delivery of these processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.40 The review team tested the Expectation by meeting with academic and administrative staff and students. In addition, committee terms of reference and minutes, exam board minutes, student handbooks and other relevant documentation were examined.

2.41 Student development and achievement is supported through a number of routes within the College. Induction is aimed at orienting students to the College, their programme of study, and specific policies and procedures through the student handbook and the College's VLE. Awarding body and awarding organisations' policies are highlighted to students, and learning portals are available for them to access specific policies when necessary.

2.42 Academic support is integrated into student learning through the application of weekly study support classes and tutorial sessions within a subject-specific setting, which enable students to explore a range of issues as necessary.

2.43 Pastoral support is provided informally through the College's open-door policy and more formally by a small welfare support team, which is well regarded by students.

2.44 The College monitors student progression in a flexible and responsive manner. QAC meetings and exam boards offer the College the opportunity to identify and respond to individual and/or cohort issues. All students are offered the opportunity to meet with programme/module leaders to discuss career planning and further studies. HNC/HND students are required to take an Employability Skills module in preparation for future careers.

2.45 The College recognises the need to enable students to develop academically and has actively enhanced provision to facilitate this. The College identified the potential for Higher National students to progress to undergraduate study on UoC programmes. In collaboration with the University, the College undertook a mapping process to identify how closely the HND units mapped against the University BA programmes. This process enabled the College to identify student learning needs, which led to the development of a bridging programme that would allow HND students wishing to progress to undergraduate study the

opportunity to do so. These bridging programmes are designed to support students in developing the skills required to succeed at undergraduate level. Students at review confirmed the usefulness of these classes in preparing them for future study and employment. The review team also found evidence of effective integration between academic and administrative staff, which leads to a highly conducive learning environment.

2.46 These highly effective practices and systems that facilitate the coherent transition and academic progression of students within and between pathways are **good practice**.

2.47 The College has invested in online resources for students to ensure convenient, wider access to textbooks and journals. Students on UoC programmes are also able to access the University online library, the British Library and LSE library.

2.48 The College has effective and integrated arrangements in place to support students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Students were positive about the resources and support available to them, and regular monitoring and evaluation ensure responsiveness to the needs of the student. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.49 The College is taking deliberate steps to collaborate with students in the enhancement of their educational experience and in the quality assurance process. This commitment is outlined both in the Student Welfare and Conduct Policy and the Student Handbook. The Handbook details the opportunities students have to engage in the enhancement of their learning as student representatives for each course. This role has developed from providing general feedback from students to informing senior managers of student experiences at the College.

2.50 Student feedback is also obtained through end-of-module survey feedback forms. Staff obtain feedback through the College open-door policy, which is adopted by academic and administrative staff at all levels including the Principal.

2.51 The College has appropriate structures and systems in place to allow this Expectation to be met.

2.52 The review team examined the student handbook, the Student Welfare and Conduct Policy, meeting minutes where students had been invited to participate, and documentation relating to student representation. The team also discussed student representation in meetings with College staff and students.

2.53 Student representatives are elected by their peers within two weeks of the programme start date. Students at the review visit described the guidance and provision provided by the College to support them in their role, including the student representative guidelines and code of practice. Students outlined their role as representatives and what is expected from them in representing the student body as the voice of each class. At the end of their period of office, student representatives are provided with official recognition of their work for the College by means of a Certificate of Appreciation.

2.54 Student representatives are encouraged to provide feedback to staff at the Staff-Student Committee meeting, which is held monthly. Terms of reference for the Staff-Student Committee indicated future plans to involve students as members to discuss and contribute to committee meetings. However, students at review did not mention these proposed changes to the terms of reference, and therefore may not be aware of this opportunity. At these meetings staff are receptive to student queries and complaints, with students' concerns listed as a regular agenda item.

2.55 In addition to representatives, student feedback is obtained through anonymous feedback forms designed by the now dissolved Student Council and provided to students at the end of each module. Students are encouraged to rate their lecturer, programme and the College. Questions ranged from querying lecturers' professionalism, punctuality, module organisation, and assessment to the quality of the environment and resources. Students are also encouraged to make comments and suggestions about how the programme could be improved. The results of student feedback are analysed and reported to QAC meetings, and an action plan is subsequently developed and emailed to student representatives.

2.56 Students who met the review team gave several examples of where their feedback had led to positive improvements, such as replacement of older computing equipment and

changes to term lengths from 10 to 13 weeks to facilitate more study time. Staff mentioned a widely used open-door policy which was confirmed positively by students at the review visit.

2.57 The College has outlined plans for student representation within Academic Board and Board of Trustees meetings. ICSA-nominated student representatives attend their own annual Course Board meeting. Students are not permitted to attend QAC meetings other than the monthly Staff-Student Committee meetings and student representatives are listed as members 'by invitation' within terms of reference of the Board of Trustees. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the College ensures student membership on deliberative committee structures at all levels.

2.58 Students are not currently given the opportunity to attend all deliberative committees. As a result, students are not able to contribute formally to discussions regarding programme design, development or approval, module evaluation, or discussions relating to the annual monitoring process. The lack of student representation results in a marked risk of the College not engaging with all students, independently or collectively. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the College ensures that there are appropriate systems in place to engage all students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.59 In conclusion, the review team recognises that the College has taken considered steps to gain student feedback and was able to see examples of change resulting from such feedback. While the College listens to the student voice and seeks to secure involvement in many ways, the review team concludes that student engagement is underdeveloped, especially in relation to representational structures and quality assurance processes. The College is addressing this through student membership of the Academic Board.

2.60 However, students are not yet represented at all levels as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Therefore, while the Expectation is met the level of risk is moderate due to weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's governance structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.61 The College's procedures relating to assessment and its approaches towards complying with the requirements of the awarding body and awarding organisations result in the fulfilment of its responsibilities for ensuring that students are enabled to achieve intended learning outcomes. The College states that the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy includes the intention to improve the student experience through assessment. The College has taken the decision to adopt formative assessment across all areas of the provision, in line with the requirement of UoC to embed formative assessment within modules. The College has also taken the decision to use electronic media for the submission and marking of work and for provision of feedback to students.

2.62 The recognition of prior learning is acknowledged using documentation that maps to relevant learning outcomes. Applications are considered under UoC's Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and the College has a procedure under the Academic Policy which complies with the requirements of Pearson. The policies are accessible on the websites of the awarding body or organisations.

2.63 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.64 The review team examined the effectiveness of the approaches and procedures through scrutinising assessment documentation, course handbooks, minutes of QAC meetings, annual monitoring reports and external examiners' reports. The team also met with senior staff, teaching and support staff and students.

2.65 The assessment regulations of the awarding body and awarding organisations apply to the relevant programmes. Assessment strategies, marking protocols and grading criteria are considered as part of the validation processes and information for students relating to assessment is communicated through handbooks. The College confirmed that academic staff meet annually and have virtual exchanges with peers in partner institutions for assessment-based discussions. The UoC moderator reports provide helpful feedback to College staff in relation to levels of achievement.

2.66 The assessment arrangements for the ICSA CCSP see the external moderator sampling work in advance of attending the examination board, which also includes the opportunity to meet with students.

2.67 Feedback to students on their assessed work is timely and developmental. Students understand the grading criteria, confirm that feedback is provided against learning outcomes and welcome the vocational relevance of their assessments and the close engagement of their tutors with professional bodies. The College regards the consistent use of formative feedback as a strength and the review team heard both staff and students speaking positively of its value. Formative feedback is recorded on a standard form and discussed during tutorial meetings.

2.68 Although there had been some resistance over electronic submission, online marking and feedback, the review team heard that students welcome this initiative as providing timely and detailed feedback.

2.69 The review team heard that students feel prepared through their assessment experiences for the transition to the next level of study; this includes those who have progressed to the level 6 bachelor's degree stage. Students are particularly appreciative of the bridging study between levels which builds up their understanding of assessment expectations at the next level.

2.70 There is an appropriate range of policies and regulations covering unfair practice, extensions, reasonable adjustments and resubmissions covering the Pearson provision, as described in the Quality Manual. UoC policies are followed for the degree programmes. Programme handbooks provide an overview of the submissions procedure, arrangements for extenuating circumstances, academic malpractice and feedback timelines.

2.71 The design of assessments for Pearson programmes is the College's responsibility and standardised assignment briefs are adopted. The College has ensured the distinction between internal verification and second marking, which was an essential action from the Pearson academic management review monitoring, through internal staff development. The external examiner for Business Studies and the annual monitoring review visit report confirm the satisfactory approaches towards assessment, moderation processes and effective tracking of student progress.

2.72 Assessment and examination boards are conducted by UoC. Course team members participate in the module assessment boards and programme assessment boards, usually through electronic communication. The external moderator attends the ICOSA examination board; this is preceded by a meeting with students. A Pearson Assessment Board meeting is conducted each semester. There is an administrator specifically for the Pearson provision who collates grades and presents the data to the Assessment Board, which is chaired by the Programme Leader. The administrative role provides a key element of the integrated model for Pearson programmes, which the team identified as an area of **good practice** under Expectation B3.

2.73 Overall, the evidence reviewed showed the procedures to be effective in practice. The College operates processes that provide students with appropriate opportunities to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes for the award of credit or qualification. The team concludes that the Expectation is 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

2.74 The responsibility for the appointment, training and management of external examiners lies with the College's awarding body and awarding organisations.

2.75 The programme teams are responsible for reviewing external examiner reports. External examiners normally attend exam board/module assessment board meetings and present their reports for consideration. The College submits its responses to the awarding body or awarding organisation. Feedback is used to inform annual module, programme and institutional review. Any recommendations are subsequently considered and actions monitored by the College at Academic Board.

2.76 The College's arrangements for using external examiner reports to monitor and improve provision would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.77 The review team tested the College's use of external examiners by scrutinising a range of documentation, including the Quality Manual, external examiner reports and relevant committee meeting minutes, as well as through meetings with academic staff.

2.78 The responsibilities of the external examiner vary between each awarding body/awarding organisation. For the ICOSA CSQS programme, external examiner input occurs through online feedback that identifies student performance issues for the College. For the CCSP programme, the external examiner is involved in design, approval and marking of assessments. The external examiner for the University programmes scrutinises and agrees all assessments with the College prior to publication, agrees final awarded grades, and attends all relevant Assessment Boards. The Pearson external examiner reviews assessment at the end of the assessment process and produces a written report for the College.

2.79 Programme teams respond to external examiners' recommendations, taking care to resolve any matters before marks are presented to Assessment Boards. External examiner reports are further considered at Academic Board meetings and actions in response to the reports are included in module, programme and institutional monitoring reports.

2.80 Students who met with the review team demonstrated limited awareness and understanding of the role of the external examiner and of the external examiner system. The College had taken a conscious decision not to publish external examiner reports in the past. Staff indicated that from this academic year all reports are being made available to students through the College learning portal. However, students who met with the review team were unaware of their availability, although reported that external examiner feedback was explained to them. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensures that students are fully informed of the external examiner role and bring to their attention the availability of external examiner reports.

2.81 The College's processes for the use of external examiners' reports are in line with the requirements of the awarding body and awarding organisations and are routinely used by the College to inform their annual monitoring and review process. Although student awareness of external examiners was limited, reports are now available for students to review. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.82 The College follows the processes of the awarding body and awarding organisations for programme monitoring and review and has its own internal processes, previously described under Expectation A3.3. The College is responsible under the partnership agreement with UoC for operating the annual monitoring process. Annual monitoring reports are produced at programme level which incorporate consideration of student performance, feedback, external examiner comments and action plans for enhancing provision. Module reports are produced by each module leader which underpin the annual programme report. Neither ICSA nor Pearson has a requirement for the monitoring and review of its programmes.

2.83 The Academic Board structure was revised in 2016 to strengthen quality enhancement on a College-wide basis. The Academic Board, chaired by the Principal, provides oversight through the bringing together of senior staff and programme leaders and includes student representatives in its membership. Building on this responsibility, the College has introduced an institutional annual monitoring report using the standardised template introduced for September 2016. The report was discussed at the first meeting of the Academic Board operating under its new constitution.

2.84 The QAC, also chaired by the Principal, is the main cross-College operational review committee which has a role in monitoring enhancement as well as the assurance of quality. Membership of this committee includes academic and support staff. Student representatives are not formal members, although they attend one meeting each month as part of the Staff-Student Committee. The processes in place would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

2.85 The effectiveness of the College's practices was tested by examining relevant documentation including the annual programme reports, minutes of QAC and Academic Board meetings. The team also held discussions with support staff, teaching staff, senior staff and students.

2.86 The review team heard that the 2015-16 programme-level reporting had been strengthened and now provides a consistent approach for the Pearson and ICSA provision. The individual module reports are seen as providing the constructive underpinning for the production of comprehensive annual programme reports. These will undergo reviews at meetings of the Academic Board whereas previously the review of programmes took place during QAC meetings. The review team found that the minutes of these meetings did not always convey the content and nature of decisions and did not provide a robust tracking of the progress of actions.

2.87 Programme-level reporting process has been introduced to strengthen programme-level monitoring and review and is in the early stages of adoption. The examples seen by the review team tended to be descriptive. However, the review team heard that the annual programme review procedure had been welcomed by staff to facilitate the discussion of emerging issues. For example, in Business Studies the review promoted a discussion around reviewing the assessment strategy for a degree module to improve pass rates and achieved this through minor changes. The documents seen by the review team demonstrate

some consideration of aspects covering teaching and learning, external examiner feedback and module reports. However, some inconsistency is evident in the updating of action columns. The action plans require the completion of impact on students and measurable targets. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College further develops the processes for programme monitoring to ensure critical analysis and evaluation, leading to actions that are effectively tracked through deliberative structures.

2.88 The review team explored the effectiveness of student involvement in programme-level meetings and the steps taken by the College to involve students in course design, approval or monitoring processes; it confirmed that student representatives attend the QAC meetings on a monthly basis. The review team heard that this remains more a consultative staff-student committee, as described in the 2015 QAA report, rather than demonstrating the proactive engagement of students in quality assurance processes. There are ICOSA Course Board meetings which are attended by the student representatives.

2.89 The team heard that module questionnaires are completed, but students are not involved in the analysis and discussion of these. The College had considered the introduction of focus groups to inform module and programme-level reporting, but this had not yet been progressed. Students had not been actively involved in the development of new programmes. Although the College has revised the meetings structure, students are not reflected in the constitution of all deliberative committees. This observation reinforces the recommendation in paragraph 2.49 above to ensure that appropriate systems are in place to engage all students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.90 Overall, the evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College is managing its responsibilities for monitoring and reviewing the programmes delivered on behalf of its awarding partners. The review team has affirmed the step taken by the College to introduce a higher education course review procedure but also makes a recommendation to ensure a more rigorous approach towards programme monitoring, and reinforces here the recommendation made in paragraph 2.49 above that the College ensures that there are appropriate systems in place to engage all students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The Expectation is met but the associated level of risk is moderate, as, while broadly adequate, quality assurance processes have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.91 The Student Complaint Procedure and Academic Appeals Procedures are accessible to staff and students on the College VLE, details of which are also specified within staff and student handbooks. The Student Complaint Procedure is underpinned by the College Equality, Diversity and Disability Policy to treat students and alumni fairly, allowing them to raise matters of concern without disadvantage.

2.92 UoC students are directed to make an academic appeal through procedures set out by the University on the University portal. ICSA students on the CCSP programme are unable to make an academic appeal, but may request an external examiner's report on a module. Students who are on Pearson Higher National programmes are directed to follow Kensington College of Business Academic Appeals Procedures.

2.93 Both College and UoC complaints and appeals policies outline the stages for the progress of an appeal or complaint, the grounds of a legitimate appeal or complaint and the timescale for the process.

2.94 The policies and procedures put in place by the College and its partners for handling academic appeals and student complaints would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.95 In testing the evidence, the review team considered documentation relevant to complaints and appeals processes and explored in meetings with staff and students how these are made available to students.

2.96 The Student Complaint Procedure clearly outlines the opportunities and precise timescales for informal and formal complaint resolution. All students who met with the review team were aware of how to access complaints and appeals information.

2.97 The Academic Appeals Procedures are applicable to students studying Pearson programmes providing that within 14 days of receiving their results they can demonstrate exceptional grounds for an academic appeal. Students cannot make an appeal against an academic judgement. Policies are available on the College VLE. If dissatisfied with the Appeals Committee decision, students can write to the Registrar for a review of their case; the Registrar can request the Chair of the Appeals Committee to review the appeal where necessary. If the appeal is still unresolved the student may contact Pearson directly, or the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) after the formal internal process is concluded.

2.98 Students on UoC courses make academic appeals directly to the University using the UoC Academic Appeals Form, available from the UoC website, which also details timescales for resolution. Students on ICSA CCSP courses cannot make an academic appeal due to the examination-based nature of their course, but they are able to request the external examiner's report on the module.

2.99 Documentation detailing complaints for the 2014-16 academic years shows successful resolution of a number of student complaints. Staff confirmed that complaints, student comments and appeals are raised and monitored in weekly QAC meetings or by the Student Welfare Officer at the monthly Staff-Student Committee meeting.

2.100 The review team concludes that the College has appropriate policies and procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

2.101 Kensington College of Business does not manage higher education provision with others and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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*

2.102 Kensington College of Business does not offer research degrees and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.103 In determining its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Most Expectations in this area are met and with low risk, with the exceptions of Expectations B5 and B8, which the review team considers to be met, but for both there is a moderate risk to student learning opportunities.

2.104 The review team identified two areas of **good practice** in the approach taken by the College to managing the quality of student learning opportunities: the enhanced Pearson provision, which provides a dynamic and integrated model for continuous student learning and development, and the highly effective practices and systems, which facilitate the coherent transition and academic progression of students within and between pathways.

2.105 There are four recommendations in this judgement area, two of which sit under B5, and one each under B7 and B8: that the College ensures student membership on deliberative committee structures at all levels (B5); ensures that there are appropriate systems in place to engage all students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (B5); ensures that students are fully informed of the external examiner role and bring to their attention the availability of external examiner reports (B7); and further develops the processes for programme monitoring to ensure critical analysis and evaluation leading to actions which are effectively tracked through deliberative structures (B8).

2.106 The recommendations in this area generally relate to areas where there is a need to amend or update details in documentation, where there is insufficient emphasis or priority given to assuring quality, or where there are weaknesses in a part of the governance arrangements. The moderate risks in a small number of Expectations do not, individually or collectively, present any serious risks to the management of this area.

2.107 The review team therefore concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities provided by 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 Information regarding the College mission statement, values and strategy is publicly available on the College website.
- 3.2 Information for prospective students is presented on the website, directing them to the application and admissions process and relevant details regarding fees, entry requirements and living in London. Each course page outlines the course curriculum, the learning resources and staff available to direct students' learning. These provisions ensure that students can select their course with an understanding of the setting in which they will be studying.
- 3.3 Information is also provided to prospective students through UCAS, University recruitment fairs and College Open Days. Activities designed to promote the College and attract students are outlined in the College Marketing Strategy. The prospectus for students on UoC programmes lists the College arrangements for partnership, potential entry and exit points, course structure and awards.
- 3.4 Current students and staff have access to the College VLE, which acts as a repository for College policies and procedures, including the complaints and academic appeals policies, the Quality Manual, programme specifications and library resources.
- 3.5 Information is provided to the public, prospective and current students and staff through the College website and through various academic and marketing materials, which would enable the Expectation to be met.
- 3.6 In testing the Expectation the review team examined College publications, including the Public Information Policy, Student Welfare and Conduct Policy, staff and student handbooks and the College website. The review team also held meetings with staff and students.
- 3.7 Information for current students regarding their programme of study is issued at induction and enrolment. At induction, students are provided with the student handbook, programme handbook and curriculum details. Students undertake induction detailing library use and plagiarism, study support and IT skills.
- 3.8 The College makes clear what is expected of students in terms of rules, regulations and policies within the College Equality and Diversity Policy and the Student Welfare and Conduct Policy. Students met by the review team spoke positively of the usefulness and accuracy of the information provided within their course handbooks and at induction.
- 3.9 UoC provides minimum standards guidance in relation to VLE content. In order to improve the consistency of the student experience the guidance details the minimum amount of information that a student could expect to find within the online learning environment. Student support is offered on the VLE including HNC study guides, academic regulations,

library resources, IT support and plagiarism information. Students at review were satisfied with the support provided by the VLE.

3.10 On completion of their course, students are provided with a detailed record of their programme of study and achievement by the College or the partner provider. The College keeps spread sheet-based records of completion data.

3.11 The College sets out their framework for maintaining academic standards within several quality assurance documents such as the Quality Assurance Manual and student and staff handbooks.

3.12 The delegation of overall responsibility for information on the College website varied between College documentation. For example, the Quality Manual states that the main website content is checked by the Principal, while the Public Information Policy indicates the Operations Director as having overall responsibility for the website. The review team found a number of factual omissions and outdated information on the College website and within the Quality Manual, which the College took steps to amend during the review visit. While an Information Quality Cycle has been put into place, this does not feature guidance regarding oversight of the content and accuracy of the College website, and meetings with staff confirmed that the website was updated on an as-required basis.

3.13 The lack of systematic oversight and monitoring of materials produced by the College increases the potential risk of inaccurate information being provided to staff and prospective students. Therefore the review team **recommends** that the College specifies ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all information is fit for purpose and trustworthy, and that robust procedures are consistently implemented and regularly reviewed.

3.14 The College provides a varied range of information regarding its provision, which is readily accessible. Students have confidence in the reliability of information that they receive from the College. Therefore the Expectation is met. However, the level of associated risk is moderate, due to the lack of rigour with which the College's procedures for ensuring that information is fit-for-purpose and trustworthy are applied.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

3.15 In determining its judgement on the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team considers that the Expectation in this area is met but that the risk to student learning opportunities is moderate.

3.16 This is because the review team found inconsistencies in the College's understanding of the line of responsibility for signing off information, inconsistencies on the College website and errors within documentation.

3.17 The review team, therefore, made a recommendation in this area to support the moderate risk, that the College specifies ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all information is fit-for-purpose and trustworthy and that robust procedures are consistently implemented and regularly reviewed.

3.18 The level of associated risk is moderate due to the lack of rigour with which the College's procedures for ensuring that information is fit-for-purpose and trustworthy are applied. However, the review team concludes that the moderate risk does not present any serious risks to the management of this area and therefore the quality of the information about learning opportunities provided by the College about its provision **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 it is committed to enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, using feedback from quality assurance processes, and has taken a deliberate step towards enhancement through its revised academic structures. The Board of Directors sets the strategic direction for the College and its terms of reference include responsibility for enhancing the quality of the student experience. The reconstituted Academic Board together with the QAC are regarded as providing the basis for enhancement-led planning. The Academic Board has responsibility for the recently introduced institutional annual monitoring report. The Board of Trustees, introduced in 2015, is composed of members drawn from a range of professional backgrounds, which the College feels will enrich the contribution of external expertise and ensure that 'procedures for enhancing the students' learning experiences are positioned securely'.

4.2 These arrangements put in place by the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The team evaluated the effectiveness of the College's approaches by examining documentation and holding meetings with the Principal, senior staff, teaching and support staff, as well as with students.

4.4 Strategic oversight is maintained through the committee structure, and the review team saw some evidence of the reconstituted Academic Board operating and discussing academic strategy as opposed to management issues.

4.5 The College has introduced an institutional annual monitoring report, which is intended to provide institutional oversight; it is anticipated that a development plan will provide the focus for institutional planning and evaluation of aspects such as the student experience, learning and teaching, and the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms to promote a portfolio-wide enhancement-led future.

4.6 Some of the actions in the inaugural action plan tend to be descriptive and would benefit from an indication of how the impact of such initiatives would be measured. The recommendation made in A3.3 for the minutes of deliberative meetings and reports to record decisions and actions comprehensively and systematically in order to promote effective planning is, therefore, repeated here.

4.7 The review team confirmed the College's strategic approach to resourcing the provision. The infrastructure has been strengthened through investment in learning resources and learning support staffing. The review team heard of initiatives being taken towards enhancing the student experience. Much of the material presented in the documentation represented core quality assurance rather than enhancement activities. Meetings with staff demonstrated some oscillation between enrichment-type responses and a more secure view of the meaning of enhancement. The review team agreed, however, that programme-level enhancements have been disseminated across the provision and recorded in the minutes of the QAC meetings. The most notable example here relates to the introduction of the study skills and employability sessions. The College has invested in enhancing the student portal. This has increased the learning resources for students,

including the online library. Students confirmed that this has improved the learning experience.

4.8 To support the student assessment and feedback experience, the College moved to electronic submission, marking and communication of feedback. Furthermore, weekly study skills programmes for all students have been embedded to integrate with the College's formative assessment strategy.

4.9 Other deliberate steps to support the strategic development of the provision include the plans to relocate to new premises offering a more conducive learning environment and the investment in virtual learning resources.

4.10 The review team heard how the effectiveness of enhancement-led initiatives arising from the quality assurance processes would be monitored and evaluated. As noted previously, however, the Academic Board is still developing its remit and is encouraged to demonstrate more evidence of reflection on academic standards and quality to inform the development of an enhancement-led culture. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College further develops its processes to ensure the identification, integration and evaluation of enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned manner.

4.11 The team concludes that the College, driven by the Board of Directors and through the Academic Board, following the revision and strengthening of its terms of reference, is implementing continuous improvement activities which will result in more robust programme-level and institutional-level plans.

4.12 Overall, the team concludes that the College has appropriate structure and plans in place to meet the Expectation. However, the level of risk is moderate as, while broadly adequate, the quality assurance procedures in place to support enhancement have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied, as some are in the early stages of development and require greater integration at provider level.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.13 In determining its judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team considers that the Expectation in this area is met but that the risk to the enhancement of student learning opportunities is moderate.

4.14 This is because, while broadly adequate, the quality assurance procedures in place to support enhancement have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied, as some are in the early stages of development and require greater integration at provider level.

4.15 To support the moderate risk the review team made the recommendation that the College further develops processes to ensure the identification, integration and evaluation of enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned manner at provider level. A further related recommendation was made under Expectation A3.3 that the College ensures that the minutes of all deliberative meetings and reports comprehensively and systematically record decisions and actions to promote effective planning.

4.16 Notwithstanding the two recommendations, overall, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations. This is because there is evidence that the College is fully aware of its responsibilities for assuring and enhancing quality and the review team has confidence that areas of weakness will be addressed promptly and professionally.

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* (FHEQIS).

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

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.

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