Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd

Kaplan International College London

June 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Kaplan International College London. The review took place on 29 and 30 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Alison Jones
- Professor Graham Romp.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Kaplan International College London 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 (Embedded Colleges) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
- provides a commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the embedded college is taking or plans to take.

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

In reviewing Kaplan International College London the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The themes for the academic year 2015-16 are Digital Literacy and Student Employability,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).[4] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Kaplan International College London

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Kaplan International College London.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Kaplan International Colleges Ltd UK **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

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

- The high quality pastoral and academic support that enables students to achieve success (Expectation B3).
- The proactive approach to identifying student needs and supporting students to enable them to progress to their preferred university (Expectation B4).
- The comprehensive use of management information to track individual students and engage them in their learning (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to Kaplan International College London.

By January 2017:

- formalise and implement the governance structure for each of the College's partner universities to ensure effective oversight of academic standards (Expectation A2.1).

Enhancement of student learning opportunities

Kaplan International College London Directors are members of the College Executive Management Board (CEMB), which meets regularly and provides a forum for sharing best practice and discussion of matters relating to quality improvements. These matters are captured within College action plans.

The College actively engages with student representatives through Enhancement Forums on various aspects of quality assurance and enhancement and these are responsive to student feedback. Another example of an enhancement initiative is the online tutorial management system, which provides an effective mechanism for monitoring student performance.

Theme: Digital Literacy

Kaplan International College London has used the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd-level Blended Learning Strategy and Learning and Teaching Framework to inform the development of its own action plan and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy that informs the enhancement of digital literacy skills of both staff and students. There is a Learning and Teaching Coordinator who supports staff in the use of blended learning and

dedicated resources to support staff. The College has used the centralised Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund to resource local initiatives.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at Kaplan International College London during 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 (Embedded College)](#).

About Kaplan International College London

Kaplan International College London (the College) was established in June 2008. It is a college within the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) pathways framework, with a location in central London. The College has five partner universities: City University London, the University of Westminster, Cranfield University, the University of Birmingham, and the University of York. The partnerships with the University of Birmingham and the University of York are recent, with students recruited on to the College's programmes associated with these progression agreements from the start of the 2015-16 academic year.

Having five partner universities, the quality assurance systems at the College differ in some respects from those of the other embedded colleges. All students join a programme specified as a pathway to only one of the partner institutions, depending on their entry qualifications. Where it becomes apparent during the course that a student is unlikely to meet the entry requirements for their chosen university, they will be counselled to transfer to an alternative programme. Otherwise, students achieving the agreed requirements at the College for entry to their specified pathway institution progress to the chosen partner university within this network. In 2014-15, the College enrolled around 400 students.

The College was reviewed as part of the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight of KIC in March 2012. The review found: confidence that academic standards are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and the College's partner universities; confidence that the quality of learning opportunities is assured and enhanced appropriately, and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and the College's partner universities; and reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that KIC is responsible for publishing about itself, its embedded colleges, and the programmes that they deliver.

The 2012 review report contained two recommendations to the College. There was an advisable recommendation to ensure that there is provision in all programmes for an external scrutiny of examination questions and summative assignments, before these are used in student assessment. The College responded by making all examination and summative assessments approved in advance by external examiners. There was a desirable recommendation to make the most appropriate use of the appointed external examiners' participation in examination boards. The recommendation has been secured by ensuring that external examiners attend assessment boards, and by increasing their engagement from one to two days.

The College has undergone annual monitoring in 2013 and 2014, and was found to be making acceptable progress and commendable progress, respectively, with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision.

Explanation of the findings about Kaplan International College London

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.

Explanation of the findings about Kaplan International College London

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The College offers foundation certificate and pre-master's programmes that guarantee students who meet specific progression requirements progress on to a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the University of Birmingham, Cranfield University, City University London, the University of Westminster or the University of York. The College also offers a Multi-Progression Pathway foundation certificate that is designed to prepare students for level 4 entry on to undergraduate programmes and students are supported to apply to a UK university of their choice through UCAS. The College also offers a Pre-Doctorate programme that helps students prepare to undertake a PhD programme at a UK university. Successful students from this programme are then guaranteed an interview at a partner university for a place on a PhD programme.

1.2   The foundation certificate programme is aligned to level 3 of the RQF and KIC's own Qualifications Framework. The pre-master's programmes and the Pre-Doctorate programmes are designed to support students to progress to postgraduate programmes and are aligned with level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

1.3   Programmes are developed in line with standard KIC procedures as outlined in the Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM) that would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team considered a range of documentation relating to threshold academic standards, including College programme and module specifications, transcripts and award

certificates, and met staff responsible for the oversight of academic standards at KIC-level and within the College.

1.4   The evidence provided to the review team demonstrates that KIC's quality assurance arrangements in setting threshold academic standards are consistently implemented and make full use of external reference points. There is clear and consistent evidence that qualification learning outcomes align with the relevant quality frameworks and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and that students successfully passing these awards at the required level are guaranteed a place on to their intended programme of study. Students who successfully complete their programme of study at the College receive a transcript of their performance and an award certificate using the standard KIC templates which addresses the recommendation from the QAA report in 2012.

1.5   College programmes are appropriately aligned to relevant external frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements. The 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

1.6   Ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of KIC programmes lies centrally with its Senior Management Team (SMT). KIC's senior academic body is the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC) which has devolved responsibility for the governance of academic standards and quality. KIC academic policies and procedures concerning the award of credit and qualifications are outlined in detail within its Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and the ASQM. The policies, procedures and reporting lines in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.7   The review team scrutinised the College processes and their effectiveness through consideration of the documented quality assurance procedures, formal agreements with partner universities, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports and programme specifications. The team also met senior management, teaching and support staff, and students.

1.8   For fully established programmes at the embedded colleges reviewed there is extensive evidence that the KIC quality assurance frameworks and regulations are fully implemented. This includes the effective implementation of formal committees with the individual partner universities that operate according to clear terms of reference within an overall quality assurance governance structures. These arrangements allow KIC to have effective oversight of academic standards and ensures that decisions relating to the maintenance of academic standards are formally agreed and recognised at the appropriate level and with the partner university.

1.9   For the two most recent articulation agreements at the College, with the University of York and the University of Birmingham, formal committees designed to undertake the role of the Joint Academic Board (JAB), or equivalent, had not been convened at the time of the review visit. It is this Committee that would ensure that the academic standards of the College programmes are appropriate for the purpose of progression to the host university. Instead, the review team was informed that operational meetings had been held between the staff at the College and representatives from each of these partner universities. Given the key role of the JABs, or equivalent, in ensuring the maintenance of academic standards, and that students have been recruited on to the College's programmes associated with these progression agreements since the start of the 2015-16 academic year, the review team **recommends** that the College formalise and implement the governance structure for each of the College's partner universities to ensure effective oversight of academic standards.

1.10   The College implements academic frameworks and regulations that enable effective oversight of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, reflecting weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's governance structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.11   The College is required to maintain definitive programme and module specifications using standard templates. These templates require the level of each programme, the intended learning outcomes, programme structure, and learning, teaching and assessment strategy to be specified. These need to be formally approved and updated when changes are agreed by APQC. Module Handbooks are developed at the College to be issued to students and must be consistent with these definitive documents. Once approved the programme specifications are stored centrally by KIC. The JAB or equivalent is responsible for ensuring that the articulation agreements with the relevant partner University are formally approved and that an accurate and up-to-date record of entry and progression requirements. There are maintained centrally on KIC's Higher Education Course Management database. The design of these arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.12   The review team scrutinised the College processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided in documented quality assurance procedures, programme specifications, module specifications, student handbooks and meetings with staff and students.

1.13   The programme and module specifications viewed by the review team contained the required definitive information as required by KIC. These had been formally approved in line with KIC requirements and updated when changes had been formally approved. The approved documentation was used by staff within the College to inform the delivery and assessment of programmes and students were issued with Module Handbooks and module summaries that were consistent with formally approved documentation.

1.14   The College fully implements KIC's requirements to ensure the maintenance of definitive records for all programmes of study and for individual student records. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

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

Findings

1.15   The College follows KIC's processes for the design and approval of modules, programmes and new pathways as outlined in the ASQM. KIC and College governance committees share responsibility for the design and approval of new products and programmes as outlined in the ASQM and the Quality Assurance Framework.

1.16   The design of the process for programme approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.17   The review team considered a range of documentation pertaining to programme approval, including relevant quality assurance processes, programme and module specifications, and committee minutes. The team also met staff responsible for the oversight and operation of the processes within the College.

1.18   The review team found that the College is provided with detailed guidance on the development, approval and amendment of programmes and modules through support from the Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) and the ASQM. The developments of new programmes and pathways draws explicitly upon the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and external frameworks and are reflected within programme specifications. Staff at the College demonstrated clear understanding of the programme approval process, outlining the new pre-doctorate programme which had been a KIC-led initiative developed closely with staff from the London College and KIC as well as CLIQ and partner universities to ensure appropriate underpinning for progression.

1.19   There are effective processes in place for the approval of taught programmes, which enable the College to ensure academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK standard for the qualification, and are in accordance with KIC academic frameworks and regulations. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.20   The ASQM sets out KIC's assessment principles including the responsibility of College level Programme Committees for ensuring that an effective assessment strategy is in place for all programmes that meet KIC's aims and principles of assessment and supports the KIC Pathways Learning and Teaching Framework.

1.21   Grade descriptors are used by Colleges to define success and the extent to which learning outcomes are met. Programme Committees ensure that assessments are designed and considered in the overall context of the programme and module learning outcomes and include an appropriate volume and balance of assessment methods. The Annual Programme Report (APR) is completed by the Programme Leader, in conjunction with the Programme Committee, before final approval is given by the SMT. It is then received by the JAB, the External Examiner and the CLIQ. The APRs inform the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes (ASQP) Report which is considered by APQC.

1.22   The College is effectively supported in the assessment process by CLIQ with supplementary written guidance such as the KIC Assessment Development Guide and the Guidelines for Establishing Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Disabled Students. Support is also provided by CLIQ through targeted training for College staff that includes developing assessment in subject areas and standardisation of marking for English language.

1.23   The review team considered that the design of the processes for securing an outcomes-based approach to academic awards would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.24   The review team considered a range of documentation including programme committee minutes, APR reports, programme and module specifications and external examiner reports. The team met staff who were involved in programme approval, setting and marking of assessments and in producing APRs. The team also met students to hear about their experience of the assessment process.

1.25   Students confirmed that module information is provided at the start of each module in a module handbook and VLE which sets out learning requirements of the module. They found the guidance provided by the College on assessment processes, particularly academic misconduct, is very useful which would be beneficial when they progress to their University studies. Feedback on assessment was timely and helpful, with reason for the mark and how to improve, although the review team noted that students experienced variation on the feedback they received on exam performance between different subjects.

1.26   KIC processes for the assessment of learning outcomes are appropriately communicated and applied at the College. The review 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

1.27   The College has devolved responsibility for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure threshold standards are met as outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework.

1.28   The College undertakes ongoing monitoring and review activities as well as annual review and periodic programme review (PPR). Using the standard KIC template, Programme Leaders have responsibility for completing the APR, in conjunction with the Programme Committee, focusing upon performance and data analysis, and highlighting good practice for wider dissemination and an action plan for resolving issues identified. JABs operated with its partner universities are responsible for considering APRs and reporting back to the College.

1.29   PPR takes place every five years and draws upon APRs and other monitoring outcomes to enable Colleges to take a holistic view of its provision, ensuring programmes remain valid and fit for purpose and meets both internal and external requirements. The outcome of the process is the PPR report, which includes an action plan which is followed up by Programme Committees and CLIQ. CLIQ undertook a systematic periodic review of all KIC Colleges in 2011-12 involving stakeholders, resulting in revised curriculum structures implemented from 2013 across the majority of colleges.

1.30   The review team considers that the design of the processes for the monitoring and review of programmes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.31   The review team considered a range of documentation including Programme Committee minutes, JAB minutes, APR reports, and APQC minutes. The team met College staff involved in programme monitoring and review activities including Programme Leaders and the Academic Director. The team also met student representatives who were members of Programme Committees.

1.32   The review team found that the College effectively draws upon a wide range of information including data on student performance and achievement within its monitoring and review activities. There is an effective partnership between the College and its partner universities. The team noted that the College and University of Westminster had established an Academic Alignment Working Group following a recommendation from the Joint Academic Management Board. The Academic Alignment Working Group has provided an additional forum for the College and University to review the students' transition to the University and to strengthen the relationship between the two institutions.

1.33   The review team was advised that the College is in discussions with all its partner Universities regarding performance data on students once they have progressed to their University studies and noted that there is some variation in the level of detail currently provided by its partner Universities. The formal agreements with partner universities now require the provision of performance data to the College and further work is being undertaken by the College to improve the quality of data to enable breakdown of results at module level and for comparison with university home and other international students.

1.34   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.35   The College follows the KIC Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) which sets out the requirements for the appointment of external examiners to each award bearing programme, or cognate group of programmes in line with university level agreed procedures. In addition, an external examiner is appointed by KIC to the credit bearing Language for Study module operating across the network of colleges. The College also draws upon the expertise and support from its partner universities to ensure that the programmes remain aligned with their progression routes and exploit opportunities to enhance the student learning experience.

1.36   Feedback from external examiners is used to inform the APRs produced by Programme Leaders at College level and the overarching institutional level ASQP report. PPR also draws upon the feedback provided through external examiner reports.

1.37   The arrangements for using external and independent expertise in the setting and maintenance of academic standards would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.38   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing external examiner reports, APRs, Programme Committee minutes and meeting College staff and students.

1.39   The review team found evidence that consideration of external examiner reports was reflected in APRs and Programme Committee minutes, together with the responses to external examiners and the summary provided to students. The team also noted that the College action plan confirmed that summative assessments were now approved by the external examiner in line with the recommendation made in the QAA review of 2012.

1.40   The College-written external report seen by the review team was completed in full, noting strengths and raising any concerns. The report dealt appropriately and robustly with matters relating to standards, with examples of recommendations being followed up by the College through the APR and programme committees. Students confirmed awareness of the external examiner process and advised that the external examiner report was made available to them via the common room notice board.

1.41   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider: Summary of findings

1.42   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.43   All Expectations in this area are met. The associated level of risk is low, except in one case where the risk is moderate, reflecting weaknesses in the operation of part of the embedded College's governance structure.

1.44   The College has rigorous policies and procedures for maintaining academic standards, which are in accordance with KIC's academic frameworks and regulations. The College works effectively with its partner universities in the quality management of programmes where there are established relationships. There is one recommendation in this area, which is to strengthen governance arrangements with university partners for more recent articulation agreements.

1.45   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Kaplan International Colleges Ltd UK at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2   Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The College adheres to KIC defined procedures for undertaking programme design and approval which follow the clear stages outlined in Chapter 2 of the AQSM. The College has devolved responsibility for the design and development of programmes and modules with support from CLIQ and other KIC internal teams as required.

2.2   KIC provides a standard set of documentation requirements to the College for the approval process that include programme and module specifications using a standard template. Once initial planning approval has been granted by the New Product Development and Approval Group (NPDAG) and the Business Approval Group for Programme Developments (BAGPD), the College has responsibility for maintaining the proposal documentation throughout the approval process, ensuring that it is updated to reflect any required amendments as appropriate.

2.3   A Programme Committee is convened by the College for each programme delivered, which includes student representation, and reports to the College SMT.

2.4   The arrangements in place for programme design, development and approval at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.5   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures, documentation relating to programme design, development and approval, and through meetings with staff and students. The team scrutinised programme and module specifications, and minutes of Programme Committees, NPDAG, BAGPD, JABs and APQC.

2.6   In adhering to the requirements of KIC Quality Assurance Framework, including the Qualifications Framework, the embedded colleges make rigorous and systematic use of the external benchmarks and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* in the design and approval of new programmes. Programme Committees and JABs undertake full consideration of all aspects of learning opportunities to be provided to students as part of the design and approval stages.

2.7   The review team noted that the remits of the JABs vary across the College partner universities, with the University of Westminster establishing with the College a joint additional Academic Alignment Working Group, which reports to its JAB. The team was advised that, for the new articulation arrangements with the University of York and the University of Birmingham, a formal JAB had not yet been established, although operational meetings were undertaken with the university partners.

2.8   The review team concludes that 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   Student recruitment and admission into the College is managed centrally by KIC where admissions staff work to a detailed procedural manual. Admission requirements are determined centrally by KIC taking into consideration the learning gain required by students in order to achieve the progression threshold onto the relevant University programme. Applicants are also invited to disclose special educational needs at the application stage so that reasonable adjustments at the College and subsequently at the University can be made if necessary.

2.10   The detailed admissions manual along with the training and support provided to relevant staff and agents would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team explored the College's approach to the recruitment, selection and admission of students by viewing documentation, including the admissions manual, prospectuses, offer letters and pre-arrival information provided in hard copy and online. In addition, the team met staff and students.

2.11   College staff were clear on the admission processes and students were very positive about the admissions process and valued the pre-arrival information and support provided to inform decision making and aid transition into the UK and the College.

2.12   If accepted onto a College programme, students are sent a detailed offer letter that confirms the nature of the offer made and the requirements needed to progress to their preferred university programme. Due to its city centre location and multiple partners, the College is not designated an embedded college by UKVI. As such students who successfully complete their programme of study at the College must return to their home country to renew their UK visa prior to progressing to a partner university. This requirement is specified to students prior to admission at the College and the KIC admissions team provide personalised support for College students prior to progression to university so that they are not disadvantaged as a result of this process. For students on the Multi-Progression Pathway and Pre-Doctoral programmes, the pre-arrival information specifies that successfully completion of the programme does not guarantee automatic progression to a particular partner university.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.14   KIC's APQC has ultimate responsibility for assuring the quality of the learning opportunities available to students across colleges. CLIQ is responsible for the management of learning opportunities including the support for curriculum development and effective student learning across KIC programmes. KIC has developed a Learning and Teaching Framework which has been used by the College to produce their own, context-specific Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework. The College has been integrated it within the College Action Plan.

2.15   The promotion, monitoring and development of the quality of learning opportunities at the College is the responsibility of Programme Committees, which report to the College Management Team. The College Management Team maintains a detailed Action Plan that is reviewed and updated every three months.

2.16   The design of the College's policies and processes to ensure high quality learning and teaching would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team examined documentary evidence relating to the College's overall approach to learning and teaching and met staff, students and recent alumni at the College.

2.17   The review team identified that the college action plan and its Learning and Teaching Assessment Framework are effectively used to monitor and enhance learning opportunities for College students. Learning and teaching methods are designed to support transition to the partner universities and students are often streamed according to their required progression targets so that learning and teaching can be more closely aligned to student needs. The College provides a highly personalised approach to learning and teaching with each student allocated a personal tutor that they are required to meet with on a regular basis. The College tailors support provided to the needs of the student and regularly counsels students on their progress and provides detailed assessment feedback, including dedicated Review Weeks at the end of each term. Students at the College consistently valued the high quality learning opportunities made available to them, and especially the support and guidance provided to them in a range of different learning contexts. The high quality pastoral and academic support that enables students to achieve success is **good practice**.

2.18   The College operates a systematic staff induction programme that includes teaching observations, a VLE introduction and talks by programme and module leaders. The College offers a range of internal staff development events including seminars and workshops aimed at the development and sharing of good practice in learning and teaching. Support is made available to staff to seek HEA Fellowship status.

2.19   The College has developed an overall framework and processes that support high quality learning opportunities and has effective mechanisms to evaluate and enhance these opportunities so that students can achieve success. 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

2.20   All students at the College are required to meet regularly with a personal tutor who is able to provide personal and academic support beyond that offered within classes. The Student Services Team at the College provide additional personal support, advice and guidance, and act as a point of referral for students who require more specialist support.

2.21   The provision of a range a different processes designed to support student development and achievement would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team investigated the effectiveness of these processes at the College through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, professional and support staff and students, and consideration of a range of documentation including the College Action Plan, committee minutes, and student handbooks.

2.22   Students at the College highly valued the pastoral and academic support provided to them by both academic and support staff, and acknowledged that additional support was readily available. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own learning in student Review Weeks and in the Student Enhancement Forums. The College holds regular Student at Risk Panels where the performance of students at risk of not meeting their progression requirements is reviewed and additional support mechanisms are introduced if needed. The College also has appointed a specific Partnership and Progression Manager with the role of supporting students in their transition. The proactive approach to identifying student needs and supporting students to enable them to progress to their preferred university is **good practice**.

2.23   The College closely monitors student attendance and performance and live data on student performance is made available to personal tutors, other staff and individual students through the College's online portal, K2. This enables personal tutors to effectively monitor student performance and engagement against their individual progression requirements and to intervene if necessary. The use of this portal is currently being considered for roll-out across the KIC network. The comprehensive use of management information to track individual students and engage them in their learning is **good practice**.

2.24   All College students are Associate Members of City University and have access to that University's resources. Students are encouraged to participate in both formal and non-formal learning opportunities offering a range of enrichment activities outside the classroom. The College systematically reviews the provision of extra-curricular activities such as welcome events, induction and social activities. The College also provides opportunities for staff from each of its partner universities to give lectures and seminars at the College and speak to students intending to progress to that university both in personal and virtually. University staff also attend the College results day again to meet students and aid transition. Trips are also arranged for College students to visit their intended university prior to progression.

2.25   The College has in place, and regularly evaluates, extensive processes that support high quality learning opportunities. 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

2.26   College staff and students are encouraged to engage in discussions to bring about enhancements to their educational experience. The College Promise (student charter) demonstrates the range of opportunities available to students to engage in their learning.

2.27   Chapter nine of the ASQM sets out clear guidance to the College regarding the requirement for the principles and purpose of student feedback as an essential component in evaluating the quality of student learning opportunities, and to inform ongoing improvements. The College is able to decide on how best to elicit formal student feedback that reflects the nature of its student body, ensuring that the outcomes are then reflected within the annual and periodic reporting processes. Mechanisms include an arrival questionnaire, module and end of programme feedback questionnaires, student discussion groups, elected and appointed student representatives, student/staff consultative committees, feedback boxes and opinion polls. Student membership is now included on Programme Committees.

2.28   Student representatives are elected and briefed by the College on their role and expectations at Student Enhancement Forums and at Programme Committees. The Programme Leader, or nominee, is required to provide advice and support to students on their role and expectations, and that their views are recorded within the minutes.

2.29   The review team considered that the design of the arrangements in place for engaging students at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.30   The review team tested the nature of student engagement by examining evidence of the different mechanisms in place. This was followed up by meetings with both staff and students in the College to clarify the extent to which these mechanisms are widespread and operating effectively.

2.31   Student representatives who met the review team advised that they had volunteered by writing a letter to Student Services who then considered and approved their appointment for the role. They confirmed that the role was effective and they felt able to discuss a wide range of issues with tutors and had been invited to attend the Programme Committee meetings.

2.32   The review team noted that the College elects Chairs of Student Representatives who organise College Enhancement Forums to elicit student feedback and ensure that minutes are provided with any actions highlighted for the attention of KIC. The Chairs of Student Representatives organise social events. Through the work of the Academic Alignment Working Group, the College and the University of Westminster are considering the use of College alumni as ambassadors to enhance student engagement. The College is also researching the feasibility of implementing a student mentor programme, particularly to support information provided to students prior to enrolment.

2.33   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. The College takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.34   The College follows the KIC policies and regulations for assessment as set out in the ASQM. This provides comprehensive information on KIC assessment processes and regulations, including internal and external moderation, marking and feedback. Chapter 12 of the ASQM also sets out the minimum requirements for successful completion of modules and programmes and how individual module marks are awarded and the calculation of the final programme average mark.

2.35   The College also provides assessment information to students during induction which is supported by written guidance provided by CLIQ such as on Academic Misconduct. Individual feedback on assessment is provided to students through tutorials which students found beneficial in helping them to improve for the next assessment and enhancing their skills.

2.36   Responsibility for the development of all module formative and summative assessments has been delegated to colleges, with the exception of the summative assessments for the Language for Study 3 module which remain centrally managed by the KIC Learning Measurement and Evaluation Team. The College draws upon the KIC Assessment Development Guide produced by the KIC Learning Measurement and Evaluation Team which outlines the fundamental principles underpinning the development of assessment strategies to enable the achievement of aims and objectives of KIC's assessment. Module Coordinators design assessment requirements in line with the Alignment Validity Reliability Effects Practicality Standards (AVREPS) framework to ensure that assessments are fit for purpose, reliable and valid. KIC guidance is also available to Colleges in making reasonable adjustments to assessments for students with protected characteristics.

2.37   The review team found that the arrangements for the assessment of students would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.38   The review team considered documents relevant to assessment and external examiner reports, and spoke to staff and to students with regard to assessment. The review team saw a range of programme and module specifications and student handbooks that included appropriate assessment information.

2.39   Programme Committee minutes, APRs and examples of data made available for assessment boards demonstrated an appropriate approach to assessment that was in line with KIC requirements.

2.40   External examiner reports scrutinised by the review team were positive about the assessment process.

2.41   Programme and Module Handbooks provide appropriate information to students on assessment including, for example, the Exceptional and Extenuating Circumstances procedure. Students with whom the review team met were content with their experience as

regards assessment. They were clear about their learning outcomes and assessment requirements, with helpful feedback received within 10 working days. The review team noted the proactive response by KIC to include more relevant assessment topics in response to student feedback regarding the relevance of Study Skills module 3, to their particular subject.

2.42   The review team noted that ongoing monitoring of assessment results is managed through Programme Committees which take action to enhance the processes through module and programme review, and in response to feedback from external examiners.

2.43   The review 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

2.44   The criteria and process by which the College nominates and appoints its external examiners are set out in the ASQM, with the expectation that the College adheres to criteria specified by the host University in addition to KIC requirements. The College notifies CLIQ prior to the formal confirmation of a new external examiner appointment, so that it can advise the College of any potential conflicts of interest. CLIQ maintains a central register of all external examiner appointed at the Colleges. JABs are informed of new appointments and extensions to appointments.

2.45   Once appointed, external examiners receive a comprehensive set of information from the College Programme Leader including programme and module specifications, the External Examiner Handbook, previous external examiner reports and the recent APR. The external examiner is required to review an agreed sample of assessed work and attend at least one Assessment Board and sign the results sheet endorsing the work of the Board.

2.46   External examiners complete an annual report using a standard KIC template normally within two weeks of the completion of the final Assessment Board. Within the report, external examiners comment upon the standards and quality of programmes, as determined by student performance, and appropriateness of the assessment process to judge the achievement of learning outcomes. The report also asks external examiners to identify areas of good practice and suggestions for enhancement. Part 2 of the report template allows for the external examiner to submit a confidential report to the KIC Director of Student Learning on any issues which are particularly important or sensitive.

2.47   The Programme Handbook includes information on the external examiner for students. In line with KIC guidance on Sharing External Examiners' Report Findings with Students, the College is required to consider the most appropriate way to share the findings with students.

2.48   The review team considered that the arrangements in place for external examining at the College would enable the Expectation to be met in design.

2.49   The review team considered documents relevant to external examiners and spoke to staff and to students. The team saw a range of external examiner reports, programme committee minutes, APRs and APQC minutes that included appropriate oversight of the external examiner process.

2.50   The review team saw evidence of external examiners' comments being identified and followed up through responses by the College within the report template and through the APRs and College Action Plans.

2.51   The review team noted that the College VLE has a dedicated page on external examiners which is supplemented by the College's Student Newsletter that provides detailed information to students on the role and purpose of the external examiner including the details of current external examiners appointed at the College.

2.52   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

2.53   College Programme Committees monitor and review programmes on an ongoing and annual basis. The APR allow the College to ensure that the learning opportunities remain appropriate, drawing upon feedback from students, staff and external examiners. Recommendations arising from APRs are recorded within the College Action Plan. College Action Plans are reviewed by the College on a regular basis and support is provided by CLIQ with development of the action plan.

2.54   The JAB ensures that the host University requirements are met through monitoring and review of programmes.

2.55   The College APRs inform the development of the ASQP report, providing APQC with opportunity to conduct systematic review of appropriateness of learning opportunities across all KIC programmes.

2.56   Colleges undergo PPR every five years and the outcomes are considered by APQC and JAB. The College's PPRR follows a standard template and includes action plans for further enhancements identified as an outcome of the process. The Programme Committee is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations are followed up appropriately and reported to the College's SMT.

2.57   The review team considered that the design of the arrangements in place for programme monitoring and review allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58   The evidence considered by the review team confirms that the monitoring and review processes for College programmes are rigorously and consistently applied to maintain standards and enhance learning opportunities. The College makes effective use of external reference points and draws upon external expertise from external examiners and staff at University partners. While the review team found effective operation of the College JABs with existing University partners, it noted that the new articulation arrangements for the University of York and the University of Birmingham had not yet established a formal JAB, or equivalent arrangement, although informal discussions were being held with the respective university partners.

2.59   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because the College has in place effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of courses.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*

Findings

2.60   The College adheres to KIC policies and procedures relating to academic appeals and complaints, including those against admission decisions as specified in the ASQM. This would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.61   The review team examined programme handbooks issued to students and met staff and students to evaluate their effectiveness.

2.62   The appeals and complaints policies and procedures are communicated to students in the Programme Handbooks, Student Handbooks and on the VLE. Staff and students were aware of the relevant complaints and appeal processes, and there was a clear emphasis at the College on seeking to resolve issues as soon as possible. Students at the College were able to identify where enhancements had been made to learning opportunities as a result of informal complaints being made known to College staff.

2.63   KIC has designed fair, accessible and timely processes for handling academic appeals and student complaints, and these are clearly communicated to students and effectively implemented at College level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.65   All the Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

2.66   The review team found that the College has developed an overall framework and processes that support high quality learning opportunities and has effective mechanisms to evaluate and enhance these opportunities so that students can achieve success. Policies and processes are effectively communicated to staff and students, and students are engaged individually and collectively as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. There are three instances of good practice that relate to Expectations B3 and B4: the high quality of pastoral and academic support provided to students; the proactive approach to identifying student needs and supporting students to enable them to progress to their preferred university; and the comprehensive use of management information to track individual students in their learning.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Public information is managed centrally by KIC. There are clear processes in place that require that published material is formally signed off by the College Director, the Managing Director or the Director of Colleges at KIC-level and by the partner universities.

3.2 The policies and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team explored the College's contribution to the production and approval of information by viewing websites, handbooks, programme and module specifications, transcripts and award certificates. In addition, the review team met College staff and students and staff from the partner universities.

3.3 Staff at the College were able to clearly explain how the processes for approving public information are implemented and students valued the high quality and accurate information provided to them. There is a close working relationship with the universities to ensure that information about programmes is reliable and accurate.

3.4 The College prospectus and website is produced and designed in close consultation with the partner university, using a joint logo. Pre-arrival guides for students are produced by Marketing in liaison with the College who check all information prior to publication. Programme handbooks are made available to students and provide comprehensive study-related information. These are approved by the Academic Director at the College.

3.5 Consistent with KIC requirements students from the College are issued with a transcript that details their achievement and where appropriate an award certificate using a standard centralised template. Transcripts have a security seal to confirm authenticity and are clear about the ultimate responsibility for the KIC award.

3.6 KIC has comprehensive processes for managing its public information and operates robust procedures to ensure their effective implementation at College level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.8   Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area. KIC has comprehensive processes for managing its public information and operates robust procedures to ensure their effective implementation at College level. The College contributes effectively to the production of information and there is a close working relationship with partner universities to ensure that programme information is reliable and accurate.

3.9   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

Findings

4.1 The College action plan records recommendations arising from APRs to enable effective evaluation and impact of progress made.

4.2 The CEMB meets normally every 6 weeks to discuss operational matters relating to quality improvements, with an action plan to monitor progress. CEMB reviews College Action Plans and provides an effective forum for sharing of good practice between KIC central staff and staff within the College which leads to enhancements.

4.3 College Enhancement Forums at the College successfully enable student representatives to share feedback they have collated from student groups on various aspects of quality assurance and enhancement relating to their programmes. For example, in response to student feedback, the College has simplified enrolment onto module pages on the VLE to enrol students automatically onto the correct modules, allowing them to access materials more quickly and easily than previously.

4.4 The review team was also advised of the development of K2, an online tutorial management system. The online portal was rolled out to all students in 2013-14, providing information to students and tutors on performance, with positive feedback about the support arrangements. During meetings with College staff, the team heard evidence that K2 plays a key role in enabling students to participate more widely in their learning experiences. Since its inception, the College has developed the portal further by providing student timetables for view by both students and staff, and enabling the staff calendar to be automatically populated with lessons and tutorials with accessibility to all teaching staff in the college. Live performance data is available including progression requirements for each student profile for tutors to view, together with the students' IELTS language scores. K2 provides the College with an effective mechanism for monitoring student attendance and performance which is discussed with individual students during tutorials.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1   KIC has developed both a Blended Learning Strategy 2013-17, and a Learning and Teaching Framework that outline key principles relating to embedding technology into learning and teaching. The College has used these documents to inform the development of its own action plan and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework, that informs the enhancement of digital literacy skills of both staff and students.

5.2   The Learning and Teaching Coordinator at the College actively supports staff in the use of blended learning to enhance learning, teaching and assessment. A range of support material is available on a dedicated blended learning page on the VLE and staff are offered regular training opportunities. Staff and students at the College were able to identify various ways in which IT is used to support learning and teaching.

5.3   Central resources have been provided to support blended learning and digital literacy across the colleges, including two dedicated Learning Technologists within the CLIQ who support colleges with digital initiatives. To share good practice and drive blended learning innovations at college level KIC has established a Blended Learning Working Group. Staff at the College found KIC-level events and resources to enhance digital literacy useful and gave examples of how they have enhanced their blended learning provision. The Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund (LTIF) has also been used to resource local digital literacy and blended learning innovations undertaken within the College and it is acknowledged that there is further work to do to enhance staff and student knowledge and skills related to digital literacy.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 24-27 of the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) handbook.

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

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.

Blended learning
Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

Credit(s)
A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

Degree-awarding body
A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

Distance learning
A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.
See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award
The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

Flexible and distributed learning
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.
See also **distance learning**.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

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

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

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