# Higher Education Review of LeSoCo

November 2014

# Contents

# About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at LeSoCo. The review took place from 4 to 6 November 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Helen Corkill
- Dr Ian Giles
- Ms Sarah Ingram (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by LeSoCo 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 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
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

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 6.

In reviewing LeSoCo 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 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement 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[4] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. 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/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-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 web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

# Amended judgement April 2016

## Introduction

In November 2014, LeSoCo underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in judgements that: the maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation meets UK expectations; the quality of student learning opportunities meets UK expectations; the quality of information about learning opportunities meets UK expectations; and that the enhancement of student learning opportunities requires improvement to meet UK expectations.

Negative judgements are subject to a formal follow-up by QAA, which involves the monitoring of an action plan produced by the College in response to the report findings.

The College published an action plan in April 2015 describing how it intended to address the recommendations, affirmations and good practice identified in the review, and has been working over the last 12 months to demonstrate how it has implemented that plan.

The follow-up process included four progress updates and culminated in the review team's scrutiny of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence, along with a one-day visit on 10 March 2016 with one reviewer. During the visit the team met senior staff, teaching and support staff and students to discuss progress and triangulate the evidence base received over the preceding months.

The visit confirmed that the recommendations relating to the enhancement of learning opportunities had been successfully addressed. Actions against recommendations, affirmations and good practice relating to academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and information, which received positive judgements, had also been completed on schedule and contributed to the progress against the Enhancement of learning opportunities.

## QAA Board decision and amended judgement

The review team concluded that the College had made sufficient progress to recommend that the judgement be amended. The QAA Board accepted the team's recommendation and the judgement is now formally amended. The College's judgements are now as follows.

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

The review can be considered to be signed off as complete.

## Findings from the follow-up process

The team found that the College had made progress against the recommendations as follows.

Recommendation - Expectation B8, A3.3 and Enhancement

The team found that the structures for management and monitoring of higher education have been strengthened following the review. Explicit senior management oversight is now provided by the Director of Faculty (Business, Creative Arts and Digital Technology),

in whose area the majority of higher education sits. This role is closely supported by the Head of Quality. These roles are effective in supporting and managing higher education. The College is now using its deliberative committees to provide more effective oversight, monitoring and enhancement of learning opportunities.

The College is in the process of compiling a single report, which will provide the summary higher education self-assessment. Staff are now closely involved in the development of the self-assessment for 2015-16. Reports are being developed at programme level, feeding into an institutional oversight report. The College also produces annual reports for its university partners, which provide oversight of the specific awards offered on their behalf. The continuing actions have strengthened the structures and processes, and have the potential, when fully embedded, to provide more effective oversight of all programmes and the enhancement of provision. The College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - B5 and Enhancement

The College has formalised the mechanisms for student membership of the deliberative structures. Student representatives now attend the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Group (HEQEG) and the Higher Education Forum (HEF). The HEF is the main deliberative meeting for student representatives, and is well attended by student representatives from a wide range of programmes. Discussions at the forum are wide ranging, and centred on quality matters and areas for enhancement. Students commented positively on the contribution they make to discussions and the management response to matters raised. Students spoke positively of their involvement as partners in their educational experience, through a wide range of formal and informal processes, and consider that their feedback informs enhancement activities. The review team therefore concludes that sufficient progress is being made against this recommendation.

Recommendation - Enhancement

The College has embedded the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Policy and strengthened its deliberative structures for higher education. This approach has established a more planned and systematic approach to enhancement activities. New deliberative structures have been established to enable the policy to be effective. HEQEG includes a wide range of staff, employers and student representatives. HEQEG has a wide remit, including developing enhancement action plans, and identifying and disseminating good practice.

A new Higher Education Staff Development Plan 2015-16 is now in place, and its potential is emerging as a driver for improvements. A new and strategic approach to the observation of higher education teaching staff has been established, based around developmental engagement and peer observation. Staff are positive about the changes and confirm the benefits of this to their teaching practice. The role of the Higher Education Improvement Practitioner has been strengthened in supporting these activities. A number of staff are pursuing membership of the Higher Education Academy, supported by the College.

Staff new to management posts have focused on ensuring that the structures and processes to support systematic review and enhancement are established. College staff have an emerging understanding of the planned and systematic approaches to enhancement at College level, which are yet to be fully embedded. Sufficient progress is being made against this recommendation.

# Key findings

## QAA's judgements about LeSoCo

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

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

## Good practice

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

- The support provided for the innovative use of new technological applications which enhance learning and teaching (Expectation B3).

## Recommendations

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

By April 2015:

- ensure that definitive programme specifications for Pearson programmes are easily accessible to students and staff (Expectations A2.2 and C)
- strengthen and clarify reporting structures to ensure effective oversight of the development, planning and quality of provision (Expectation A3.3)
- introduce and embed a policy and procedures for assessment boards for Pearson programmes (Expectation B6)
- develop and embed an effective process to ensure that all information is fit for purpose, accessible and accurate (Expectation C).

By June 2015:

- ensure that staff understand and engage with the Expectations of the Quality Code, the subject and qualification benchmarks, and the FHEQ (Expectation A1)
- develop and embed mechanisms to review and monitor processes for recruitment, selection and admission of students (Expectation B2)
- ensure the annual monitoring process provides more effective oversight of all programmes and the enhancement of provision (Expectations B8, A3.3 and Enhancement)
- develop and implement strategies to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities (Enhancement).

By September 2015:

- develop and embed processes for systematic engagement with employers in programme development and review (Expectations B1 and A3.4)
- introduce a strategic approach to developing staff as higher education practitioners (Expectation B3)
- further develop students' opportunities to engage with work-based and placement learning (Expectations B3 and B10)
- develop and embed consistent monitoring and review of the College's approach to student engagement (Expectation B5).
- increase the involvement of students in the formal quality assurance and enhancement processes at all levels, and use feedback to inform improvements (Expectations B5 and Enhancement)

## Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that LeSoCo is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- the steps taken to implement and embed the assessment principles and guidelines outlined in the Higher Education Assessment Handbook to enhance the variety and validity of assessment practice (Expectation B6).

## Theme: Student Employability

LeSoCo's aspiration is to become a leading institution for employability and entrepreneurship. This aim is supported in the College's strategic vision. At present the College is in the process of rebuilding its formerly extensive network of employer links, and ensuring that the curriculum offered is relevant to the current and future needs of local and regional employment. This approach is supported by the recently developed action plan for developing students' employability skills. The College employs a specialist careers guidance officer to support higher education students in gaining employment. Employability is embedded in curriculum design and all programmes have a vocational focus, and are designed to equip students to gain employment in a competitive market.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining Higher Education Review.

# About LeSoCo

The College was formed in August 2012, following the merger of Southwark College and Lewisham College. LeSoCo is a general further education college, with four main campuses, in Lewisham, Deptford, Waterloo and Camberwell. Since the merger the College has focused on integrating the two institutions and is currently in the process of major internal restructuring. The College has nearly 18,000 students and is one of the largest further education colleges in London. The institutional vision is to be a 'college for employment, for our students, our employers and our communities'. The College's values include being ambitious, inclusive, enterprising and resilient. These values are supported by a number of strategic aims. The curriculum offer is centred on vocational and work-based learning with a high volume of preparation for life and work programmes.

Following an inadequate Ofsted inspection in November 2013, the Minister for Skills and Enterprise designated the Further Education Commissioner to assess the position of the College in line with the government's intervention policy. A report by the Commissioner was published in May 2014. Following this report and the retirement of the Principal, along with the departure of other members of the senior management team, the College was placed in recovery. An interim Principal was appointed in June 2014 with a new permanent appointment planned from March 2015. The interim Principal is supported by a number of interim senior managers in preparation for a further full inspection by Ofsted which is anticipated in the Spring Term of 2015.

The College is in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University, the University of East London, and the University of Greenwich. Arrangements are set out in partnership agreements with each university. The College has operational responsibility for the delivery of programmes, including quality assurance and enhancement, marking and assessment, and the welfare and support of students. The College also works in partnership with one awarding organisation, Pearson Ltd, offering Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. The higher education provision is largely integrated into curriculum areas, alongside further education provision. This structure supports the internal progression of students from level 3, and the College's ethos of widening participation. The College's intention is to refocus its work with local employers, providing programmes which support the needs of the local economy and provide the skills required. In 2014-15 the College has 166 full-time students enrolled on 11 programmes of study.

The College has made some progress in addressing the six areas of good practice and two desirable recommendations from its last QAA review in 2010. The initial actions put into place following the summative review, to review and clarify reporting lines, have not become embedded. The frequent changes at senior management level have resulted in the actions related to the recommendations not being effectively or routinely applied. The College has further developed some areas of good practice, although others have been superseded by changed approaches and priorities within the College.

# Explanation of the findings about LeSoCo

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 LeSoCo

# 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 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's roles and responsibilities, as delegated by Canterbury Christ Church University, the University of Greenwich, and the University of East London, are clearly set out in its partnership agreements. Pearson provides the regulatory framework for Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND) qualifications. The qualifications provided by the College in partnership with the three universities adhere to the principles laid out in the awarding bodies' academic regulations and quality assurance handbooks. These specify the external reference points, including *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), subject and qualification benchmarks, and the Quality Code, which inform programme approval decisions. Adherence to these regulatory frameworks for academic standards enables the College to meet Expectation A1 of the Quality Code.

1.2     The team tested the College's approach to the operation of the frameworks by examining documents setting out the quality assurance processes that inform programme approval, monitoring and review, and by reviewing programme specifications and reports of programme approval and review events. The team considered how information about qualifications is presented to students by looking at student handbooks and information held on the virtual learning environment (VLE). The review team also talked to link tutors, senior College staff and students, and others involved in programme delivery.

1.3     The College works with its partners to ensure compliance with delivery, assessment and award requirements. Senior staff understand the notion of maintaining standards set by awarding partners and are clear about their varying responsibilities. The College does not have delegated authority from its degree-awarding bodies to design and develop new programmes. The validating universities provide detailed procedures, forms and guidance through their quality assurance handbooks, academic regulations and assessment procedures documentation. These requirements ensure that programmes align with the relevant qualification descriptor and external reference points. New Pearson programmes are developed through the selection of an appropriate mix of the approved modules provided. Pearson sets the standards for the HNC and HND programmes offered, and provides detailed documentation on procedures and guidance.

1.4     All qualifications approved by the degree-awarding bodies have programme specifications, which provide the programme learning outcomes for each award, and indicate how these are met in individual modules. Programme specifications were not available for Pearson programmes, although definitive module outlines are provided. Documentation across the provision confirms that standards are set at an appropriate level for all programmes.

1.5     The College has recently developed a Higher Education Strategy 2014-17, which provides a useful framework for activity. However, roles and responsibilities, as set out within the College's partnership agreements, are not fully reflected in this document. College staff have only general awareness of the external reference points and of the relevant subject and qualification benchmarks, and how these impact on their activities. Staff at all levels demonstrate limited understanding of the FHEQ, the Quality Code and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*. They were unable to articulate the defining characteristics of foundation degrees despite these being a key part of the curriculum offered. The review team **recommends** that by June 2015 the College ensures that staff understand and engage with the Expectations of the Quality Code, the subject and qualification benchmarks, and the FHEQ.

1.6     Assessment requirements for each programme are clearly defined. This information is communicated to students in accessible student handbooks and through the VLE. Internal moderation processes check appropriateness of marking and grading. External examiners confirm that standards are met, and that students achieve the intended learning outcomes.

1.7     Overall, the College fulfils the requirements of its degree-awarding bodies and of Pearson. Ultimate responsibility for allocating each qualification to the appropriate level in the FHEQ rests with the degree-awarding body or organisation. Specification of learning outcomes ensures that programmes align with the FHEQ. Internal and external examination processes confirm that learning outcomes have been achieved. Although the College has limited knowledge and understanding of regulatory frameworks, it adheres to the requirements of its partner organisations. The review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met but that the level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:   Moderate**

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

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

**Findings**

1.8     The *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* and Subject Benchmark Statements are used appropriately by the College's university partners when developing new programmes. The degree-awarding bodies are responsible for securing academic standards and establishing the academic frameworks that govern the award of credit and qualifications. The HNC/D programmes are developed and managed in line with the specification provided by Pearson. Provision of this information enables the College to meet Expectation A2.2 of the Quality Code.

1.9     The team considered a range of documents outlining the academic frameworks and assessment regulations, and programme approval and review processes. The review team also spoke to senior managers, teaching staff, and students to ascertain their understanding of responsibilities within the context of the partnership agreements.

1.10     The College's memoranda of agreement with the three universities set out clear responsibilities. Responsibilities are understood and acted upon at programme level. However, the responsibilities checklists provided by the College demonstrate some conflicting understanding of responsibilities.

1.11     The College takes appropriate account of the universities' regulations and quality handbooks, and those of Pearson. Staff use and understand the varying processes and procedures required by its awarding body partners. The College has recently produced a Higher Education Quality Procedures Handbook, although this has yet to be embedded in staff understanding, or evaluated in practice. The Handbook does not provide comprehensive information and does not cover arrangements with all partners.

1.12     There are clear academic frameworks and regulations to govern the award of academic qualifications and credit. The engagement of the College with the requirements set by the awarding bodies, combined with the documentary evidence provided, demonstrate that Expectation A2.1 is met and that risk in this area 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**

1.13    The College maintains records of the programmes that have been validated . Programme specifications from the three universities are appropriate, up to date and accessible to students. There is less clarity surrounding the requirements of the HNC/D programmes and the programme specifications are unclear about the definitive programme requirements.

1.14    The annual programme self-assessment reports require staff to review specifications and comment on the effectiveness of the relationship with the awarding body. Each university provides a link tutor who maintains a supportive relationship with the programme team, and ensures that programmes delivered at the College adhere to required processes. Proposed changes to programmes are initially discussed with link tutors and then agreed through the appropriate university mechanisms. The College confirmed that the responsibility for certification and transcripts lies with the awarding body. The awarding bodies provide information to the College regarding their role in maintaining records of the programmes. Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Greenwich require the College to adhere to their own annual monitoring processes, and to approve teaching staff.

1.15    The responsibility of the awarding bodies to keep definitive records of the programmes they have developed and validated are well understood. The College maintains responsibility for the quality assurance of the programmes it delivers on behalf of its four partners to ensure the academic standards of programme delivery, and that assessment practices meet the Expectations of the Quality Code, and specifically the FHEQ level descriptors.

1.16    The review team looked in detail at policies and processes for developing programmes, creating programme specifications, and their publication. Staff discussed new programme development and the review of current programmes. The team tested the understanding of this process in meetings with senior staff, delivery staff and the marketing team.

1.17    The effective relationship between the awarding bodies and the College staff ensures that processes are consistently followed. University programme specifications are readily accessible to students through the programme handbook and on the VLE. The College relies on its own arrangements for the Pearson programmes, but staff are uncertain of the detailed requirements owing to the newness of some programmes. For Pearson awards programme specifications are not comprehensive, the information provided is fragmented, and they do not provide a definitive record of the programme. The review team **recommends** that by April 2015 the College ensures that programme specifications are consistent in scope and content, and that the definitive versions are easily accessible by staff and students.

1.18    Overall, the College understands its responsibilities for maintaining a definitive record of each programme. Information about the aims, intended learning outcomes and

expected achievement is available to students, but needs to be more consistent in format and more readily accessible. The team concludes that expectation A2.2 is met, but that the level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:   Moderate**

**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**

1.19     Programme development and approval documentation shows the mapping of modules for each programme to the learning outcomes, which are benchmarked against the requirements of the FHEQ. Arrangements with Pearson for the Higher National awards are also clearly outlined and reflect the National Occupational Standards. Ultimate responsibility for academic standards resides with the awarding bodies. The roles and responsibilities of the College delegated by the universities are clearly set out in written partnership agreements. The development of new programmes adheres to the principles laid out in the awarding bodies' academic regulations and quality assurance frameworks. The regulations specify appropriate external reference points, including the FHEQ, and the subject and qualification benchmarks used in programme approval decisions. These are clearly informed by the Quality Code. Adherence to these frameworks for threshold academic standards enables the College to meet Expectation A3.1 of the Quality Code. The College does not have delegated authority from its degree-awarding bodies to design and develop new programmes.

1.20     The review team tested the College's approach by examining documents setting out the programme approval processes, and by reviewing programme specifications and reports of programme approval events. The team considered how information on qualifications is presented to students by looking at student handbooks and the VLE. The team also held meetings with partnership managers, senior managers, curriculum managers, teaching staff and students.

1.21     The College is involved in programme design in a variety of ways. The FdA Music and Production was developed in close partnership with the University of East London. The education programmes delivered with Canterbury Christ Church University were developed by the University, and are offered through a number of colleges in a consortium arrangement. The FdA Early Years Education programme, originally validated through London South Bank University, is now franchised through the University of Greenwich; the College worked closely with the University in remodelling the programme and ensuring it aligns with the relevant regulatory framework.

1.22     Higher National programmes are developed by the College through selection of a range of units available from Pearson. In 2013-14 the College introduced new programmes in HND Business (Accounting) and HND Performing Arts, although there is no evidence of how internal processes for design, development and approval are used within the College.

1.23     The terms of reference for the newly constituted Higher Education Steering Group, chaired by the interim Vice Principal (Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience), state that its remit is to approve all new modules and programmes. At the time of the review there were no examples of this process having taken place, or of how this had worked previously. Staff at all levels showed a lack of clarity about how programme development and approval processes work, and they had little knowledge or understanding of the national regulatory frameworks which inform this. This matter is addressed in two other recommendations: in Expectation A2.1, asking the College to strengthen and clarify reporting structures to ensure

effective oversight of the development, planning and quality of provision, and in Expectation A2.1, to ensure that staff understand and engage with the Expectations of the Quality Code, the subject and qualification benchmarks, and the FHEQ.

1.24     Overall, the processes for the approval of new programmes. as required by the awarding bodies/organisation are in place ensuring that programmes align with the FHEQ, *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* and Subject Benchmark Statements. These processes are understood by staff, although the internal College processes need to be formalised and embedded. The review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:   Moderate**

**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**

1.25    Programme outcomes are validated through the awarding bodies and organisation's processes, and a definitive validation document is produced for each programme. Assessment of modules is against published learning outcomes which ensure that threshold standards are met or exceeded. Modules are approved by the College's awarding bodies. College staff undertake initial marking, double marking as required, and moderation according to the partner universities' academic regulations. Assessment is scrutinised by one or more external examiners and academic credit is awarded by the examination board of the partner university. The Higher National provision uses a system of internal verifiers and external examiners. Adherence to the frameworks for the award of academic credit following assessment enables the College to fulfil its responsibilities towards the awarding bodies in securing Expectation A3.2 of the Quality Code.

1.26    The review team tested the College's approach to securing the award of credit and qualification by examining the requirements of the awarding bodies, and by examining documents setting out the internal assessment and moderation processes. The team reviewed minutes of moderation boards and external examiners' reports and also talked with senior managers, curriculum managers, teaching staff and students.

1.27    The College's approach to assessment is based on local practice within programme teams, implementing standards laid down by awarding bodies, partner university requirements and supported by the College's quality assurance frameworks. These frameworks articulate with external arrangements wherever necessary and compliance is secured through the operation of the College's Quality Unit.

1.28    Programme approval documents for foundation degrees include the programme level learning outcomes and the assessment strategy. Module specifications of the degree-awarding bodies stipulate the assessment requirements designed to meet programme and module learning outcomes. Assessment details for students are set out in detail in the module handbooks. These are linked to externally validated standards and describe the evidence required to demonstrate successful attainment of the learning outcomes. Students understand the relationship between assessment requirements and the intended learning outcomes and what they need to do to achieve their award.

1.29    Assessment moderation is subject to oversight by external examiners who confirm the module and programme assessment criteria. External examiners' confirm that assessments allow students to achieve the learning outcomes. The College attends progression and awards boards at the relevant universities where academic credits and qualifications are approved. As a Pearson-approved centre the College appoints an internal verifier for each programme. An external examiner appointed by Pearson visits the College annually to sample work, meet students and attend Higher National assessment boards.

The reports from external examiners indicate that the students who pass attain threshold standards.

1.30    The terms of reference for the new constituted Higher Education Steering Group, chaired by the interim Vice Principal (Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience), indicates that this group has the remit to review and agree the terms of reference for Higher National assessment boards, although this process has yet to be put in place.

1.31    The review team considered that the College programme teams engage with the procedures of the awarding bodies for the award of credit and final qualification. The external assessment processes in place within the awarding bodies confirm that threshold standards are achieved. However, the College has only recently established a system to gain oversight and enhancement of the assessment processes and practices across its higher education provision. The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met and that the risk in this area 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**

1.32      The College engages with the policies and procedures of its awarding bodies for monitoring and reviewing the programmes it delivers. These requirements are set out in the memoranda of agreement. The degree-awarding bodies and Pearson each require that the College completes an annual monitoring report. This includes a commentary on external examiners' reports and student achievement. University programmes are reviewed every five years through a critical appraisal and review. This is produced by the programme leader with support from the university link tutor. As a Pearson-approved centre, the College follows the procedures and quality assurance processes required. Adherence to the frameworks for annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes enables the College to fulfil its responsibilities in securing Expectation A3.3 of the Quality Code.

1.33      The review team tested the College's approach by scrutinising monitoring and review documents. The review team also had discussions with senior managers from the College and partner universities, curriculum managers, teaching staff and students.

1.34      The College engages appropriately with the policies and procedures for monitoring and review required. Monitoring reports are used for evaluation at module level and take account of comments from external examiners, student achievement and student feedback.

1.35      For University of Greenwich programmes a monitoring report is completed annually which evaluates achievement and operational matters at programme level. Link tutors are involved in meetings with College staff in this annual process. Actions are drawn from this evaluation and contribute to the enhancement of the programme. Other annual reports produced at programme level are completed in a similar fashion and College staff work closely with colleagues in the universities. For example, College staff responsible for the FdA Music and Production present the annual monitoring report at the University of East London faculty academic board.

1.36      Scrutiny of provision within the College takes place at departmental level using a higher education self-evaluation report that includes a quality improvement section. The universities and Pearson deploy external examiners who visit the College at least once a year and produce an annual report for each programme. The good practice and any issues arising are addressed by the staff team and included in the programme monitoring reports.

1.37      The review team learnt that following the unsatisfactory Ofsted inspection in November 2013, the governing body established a Quality Recovery Board. Recently the governing body has identified a link governor, with experience in the sector, to provide more focused oversight of higher education, and support the corporation's understanding. Governors now receive regular reports on higher education, although these are largely descriptive and provide little evaluation.

1.38      In August 2014 the interim Director of Teaching, Learning and Assessment began a fundamental review of the College's higher education management and coordination mechanisms. As part of this activity the College produced a detailed action plan.

This document includes actions to clarify the reporting lines and levels of accountability of the various deliberative groups, review the reporting structure to provide a more effective oversight of the quality assurance, and evaluate programme reviews and monitor action plans. Alongside this, a newly introduced higher education quality calendar provides helpful guidance for programme and module leaders and curriculum managers about ongoing quality review activities.

1.39    A Higher Education Steering Group has been recently established to ensure the College maintains central oversight. However, its effectiveness is yet to be evaluated and only two meetings had been held at the time of the visit. Terms of reference for the Steering Group provide a broad outline of processes for quality assurance, but do not explicitly consider enhancement mechanisms or student engagement. Membership of the Group includes senior managers, the Head of Academic Recovery and assistant principals responsible for curriculum areas. Teaching and support staff and students are not specifically represented. The Steering Group meets termly to support the work of the cross-College Curriculum and Quality Group, which has oversight of both further and higher education. Both Groups report directly to the executive team and membership of both groups is identical, although with differing terms of reference.

1.40    The annual monitoring and reporting undertaken by programme teams ensures that responsibilities placed on the College are discharged. The programme teams engage effectively in periodic review. However, there is no effective overarching process in place to enable the College to gain oversight of its higher education provision, and to drive enhancement. The review team **recommends** that by April 2015 the College strengthens and clarifies its reporting structures to ensure effective oversight of the development, planning and quality of provision.

1.41    The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met and that the risk in this area 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

1.42    The College uses external expertise in programme development, validation and review. External academic and industry input is sought during new programme development and the universities and Pearson both use external representation in validation. External examiners report explicitly on the setting and maintenance of standards. Link tutors from the universities provide continuing academic support and advice to programme leaders. There is currently no systematic mechanism for employers and other external stakeholders to inform these processes.

1.43    The review team tested the use of external expertise by reading external examiners' reports, annual programme review reports and minutes of meetings, and through meetings with staff and students. The approach to the use of external expertise enables the College to meet Expectation A3.4 of the Quality Code.

1.44    The College engages appropriately with the requirements of its degree-awarding bodies for the approval and review of programmes. The College has little direct involvement with the design or development of programmes, and most of this is undertaken by the awarding bodies. For programmes run in partnership with the University of Greenwich, the College is able to propose changes annually through a system of minor modifications. The College is well supported by partnership staff from its awarding bodies. At programme level there is evidence of good communication and there is effective support provided by link tutors.

1.45    External examiners are currently all drawn from academic backgrounds. All external examiners' reports are received in a timely manner, prior to completion of the end of year self-assessment process. This permits effective use of external examiners' comments to inform developments and improvements.

1.46    However, there is no systematic involvement of employers and other external stakeholders in the design, approval and review of programmes. This matter is addressed as part of the recommendation in Expectation B1, which asks the College to develop a more strategic approach. Collaboration with employers has been set as a strategic objective but there is currently little evidence of the impact of this. There is evidence of informal approaches to using external stakeholders during programme design and review. In FdA Early Years Education employers participate regularly in updating staff on sector developments. HND Performing Arts staff have worked closely with local theatre companies, identifying clear progression routes for students by addressing the requirements of specialist dance and drama schools in London, The Higher Education Quality Assurance Toolkit 2014-15 indicates an expectation that external expertise will be used in assessment design, although this has yet to take place.

1.47    Overall, the review team is satisfied that external and independent expertise is used appropriately in line with the requirements of the partner universities. Comments from

external examiners and other external sources are responded to effectively. However, the College has yet to establish systematic and effective mechanisms for engaging employers to make more effective use of industry links and expertise. The review team concludes that Expectation 3.4 is met and the level of risk low.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

# The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisation: Summary of findings

1.48     In reaching its judgement about threshold academic standards the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.49     Although all of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met, the risk is judged moderate in four cases: Expectations A1, A2.2, A3.1 and A3.3. In all sections related to academic standards the College is also required to adhere to the procedures of its awarding bodies and organisation.

1.50     There are three recommendations in this area. To ensure staff engage with the expectations of the Quality Code, the subject and qualification benchmarks, and the FHEQ, and that the College strengthens and clarifies its reporting structures to ensure effective oversight of the development, planning and quality of provision. A further recommendation relates to ensuring that programme specifications provide an accessible and definitive record of a programme of study.

1.51     The review team concludes that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the College's degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation **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 and Approval***

**Findings**

2.1      The College operates within the procedures for validation and revalidation of programmes operated by its degree-awarding bodies. Some programmes designed by a partner university are offered as a franchise agreement. Occasionally teams within the College develop programme outlines for submission to the appropriate committee within the partner university for approval. The College's internal programme approval policy and procedures are not yet fully formalised or embedded within the committee structure.

2.2      For Higher National programmes, following centre recognition, programme approval is sought from Pearson to run a range of HNC/D programmes. Validation of these follows the Pearson procedures. The College selects the relevant mandatory and optional units that meet the required number of credits for the award.

2.3      The system of design and approval of new programmes is appropriate, and the College has established two new programmes, HND Business (Accounting) and HND Performing Arts. In 2014 the College transferred validation of FdA Early Years Education from London South Bank University to the University of Greenwich using appropriate mechanisms. The University of East London recently reviewed the FdA Music and Production, and the qualification delivered at the College will be subject to periodic programme review in 2015. The approach the College takes towards programme design and approval enables it to meet Expectation B1 of the Quality Code.

2.4      The review team examined the partnership agreements with the degree-awarding bodies, the College processes for the approval of new programmes, and the terms of reference for the Quality Recovery Board and the Higher Education Steering Group. They also discussed the processes for programme approval with senior and academic staff.

2.5      The team found that, following recent staff changes, College staff have little direct experience in programme design. Members of programme teams gave examples of working successfully in collaboration with their awarding bodies on programme development and approval. However, staff often rely on partners to ensure the requirements of the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and latest industry standards are met when writing or selecting modules. The team found that College staff had very limited understanding of the FHEQ, *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* and Subject Benchmark Statements. This matter is addressed as part of the recommendation in Expectation A1.

2.6      The College's aspiration is to pursue specific employment sectors to meet local and regional needs. However, the College acknowledges that there needs to be greater alignment of the curriculum offer with local skills needs and requirements to support this aim. There is little evidence of a strategic and systematic use of employers in programme development and review. Therefore, the team **recommends** that by September 2015 the College develops and embeds processes for systematic engagement with employers in programme development and review. This matter is also addressed in Expectation A3.4.

2.7      The terms of reference of the new Higher Education Steering Group include responsibility for the approval of all modules and programmes, and make recommendations for the expansion of the programme offer. However, this process has only recently been introduced so it is not possible to evaluate its effectiveness.

2.8      Overall, the College has effective processes in place for the design and approval and has successfully validated a number of programmes in recent years. However, there needs to be further work in engaging employers in this process, and in embedding the recently developed internal processes. Therefore, the team concludes that Expectation B1 is met but that the associated risk is moderate.

**Expectation:      Met**
**Level of risk:   Moderate**

**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***

**Findings**

2.9     The College has a clear policy and procedures for managing its responsibilities for fair admissions. As a subscriber to UCAS most students apply to the College through this mechanism, although direct applications are also permitted. All applicants attend an interview or audition. The procedures for the recruitment and selection of initial teacher education students has recently been strengthened, and schools contribute to the process for interviewing trainees. This approach enables the College to meet Expectation B2 of the Quality Code.

2.10     The review team looked at the admissions process in detail, including the higher education prospectus and College website, and talked to students about their experience of the admissions and enrolment process, along with admissions and support staff and academic staff.

2.11     Prospective students are informed, through information on the website, that their programmes are not awarded by the College. They are encouraged to ask staff about any queries they may have. The College's higher education adviser gives detailed advice regarding finance and the range of provision available to applicants. However, some of the information on the website contains inaccuracies, including that related to the level of study, the length of the programme, and the awarding body.

2.12     Applicants are promptly informed of whether they are to be admitted onto the programme. However, decisions about whether a programme is viable to run can sometimes be made as late as the first week of term. Where this happens applicants are provided with individual advice and guidance on transferring. However, late cancellations limit an applicant's options to begin studying during that academic year.

2.13     Applicants are able to raise complaints and appeals about admissions through the College Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Policy, and applicants are informed of this process as required. Students are asked to provide feedback about the admissions, enrolment and induction processes, although no report or analysis of this data has yet been undertaken, although this is planned.

2.14     In practice, the College provides applicants with enough information to enable them to make an informed decision. Successful candidates are then provided with transitional information to facilitate study at level 4 and above. There is an intention to review admissions information and an acknowledgement by the College that there is currently little analysis of the admissions process. The review team **recommends** that by June 2015 the College develops and embeds mechanisms to review and monitor processes for recruitment, selection and admission of students. This matter is also addressed in Expectation C.

2.15     Overall, the team confirms that there is a clear admissions policy, and procedures which are applied across all programmes. Students are treated consistently and fairly throughout the selection and application process. However, there are inaccuracies in some of the information provided and little analysis is undertaken of the admission, enrolment and

e-induction process. The team therefore concludes that Expectation B2 is met but that the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:    Moderate**

**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**

2.16     The College's approach to learning and teaching and the provision of learning resources is defined principally in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, along with strategies for lesson observation and technology-enhanced learning. These approaches to the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices enable the College to meet Expectation B3 of the Quality Code.

2.17     The review team considered the operation of the lesson observation process and scrutinised the Improving Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Strategy 2014-15. The team cross-referenced these with the Higher Education Learning Centre Strategy, the Higher Level Skills Strategy and the Higher Education Quality Improvement Action Plan. The operation of peer observation was explored with staff. The team talked with senior staff, teaching and delivery staff and to students about their experiences of teaching and learning.

2.18     The College articulates its policies and procedures through a range of documents. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy does not, however, refer explicitly to the specific requirements of higher education. Many policy documents are very recent, dating from the current academic year, and have not yet had time to be fully implemented or embedded. Similarly, procedures to review policies and practices have been enhanced but as yet have not been tested.

2.19     The Higher Education Learning Centre Strategy is being effectively implemented, and provides a sound basis for the development of technology-enhanced learning. There has been substantial development of e-learning, including the provision of mobile computing tablets, and technology-focused learning hubs. Minimum standards for the use of the VLE have been introduced and curriculum managers audit e-learning usage in their departments and staff training is offered. There are examples of the use of the VLE in FdA Music and Production and also in FdA Business Information Technology. The College encourages staff to experiment with the use of new applications, including the College's own internet video channel and most recently, a virtual classroom. Students confirm the helpfulness of the VLE, and the opportunity to link in virtually to classes through the use of webcams. The support provided for the innovative use of new technological applications which enhance learning and teaching is **good practice**.

2.20     The College regularly monitors the quality of its teaching through management observation of lessons, using an Ofsted graded system. Learning Walks are also undertaken by managers which allow them to make unannounced observations of teaching. However, it is not clear how the outcomes of lesson observations are used to drive strategic improvements in learning and teaching. Peer observation is undertaken informally, and is not currently recorded or evaluated. However, many teaching staff engage with this, and are enthusiastic about the opportunity. Music staff visit the University of East London to observe teaching sessions, and arrangements are made for performing arts tutors to observe and participate in lessons at specialist dance and drama institutions in London.

2.21     The College identifies development needs through a staff appraisal system where performance is recorded and reflected upon. All teaching staff are required to undertake 30 hours of continuing professional development annually. In-house staff development is offered one afternoon per week, and on three days per year. There is little staff development specific to higher education. Other staff development activity is undertaken on an informal basis, often driven by personal aspiration. Funding is allocated through the annual departmental budgeting processes. The College supports some staff to undertake subject updating, and higher academic and professional qualifications.

2.22     Teaching staff also engage with subject-based development through their partner university. There is an annual College conference on teaching and learning, but only some of this focuses specifically on the needs of higher education. In some curriculum areas teaching staff are also active practitioners in their fields. In performing arts staff have produced videos on parallel thinking, designed to enhance creative and thinking skills, for use by staff and students.

2.23     However, there is no strategic approach to developing staff as higher education teachers and practitioners. College staff are unaware of support offered by the Higher Education Academy or of the UK Professional Standards Framework. The College has not made systematic links with its university partners to support further pedagogical development. The review team **recommends** that by September 2015 the College introduces a strategic approach to developing staff as higher education practitioners.

2.24     The College has not yet developed an effective strategic approach to the involvement of employers and external stakeholders in the development, delivery and review of programmes. This is referenced in the College's Strategic Plan. The Head of Academic Recovery, who was appointed in June 2014, has a remit to enhance the student experience, and work-based learning.

2.25     Students state that the skills and attributes developed makes them more employable and more confident in seeking appropriate work. However, with the exceptions of FdA Early Years Education and the initial teacher education programmes, there are limited opportunities for students to engage with learning in the workplace. Students studying FdA Music and Production, and FdA Business Information Technology do not systematically engage with work-based or placement learning. Students requested more engagement with employers and further opportunities for learning in the workplace. The review team **recommends** that by September 2015 the College further develops students' opportunities to engage with work-based and placement learning. This matter is also addressed in Expectation B10.

2.26     Overall, the effectiveness of the approach to developing learning opportunities and teaching practices is variable. A number of key strategies have recently been introduced, although these have not yet been embedded or evaluated. There is a lack of systematic approaches to engaging with employers and other external stakeholders and offering workplace learning activity. There is no strategic process for developing staff as higher education practitioners. However, there is good practice evident in the innovative uses of e-learning and the use of new technological applications. The review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met and that the risk in this area is moderate.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Moderate**

**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**

2.27     The College has a range of strategies and policies to ensure the appropriate provision and monitoring of learning opportunities and resources. The Higher Education Strategy provides a framework for development and delivery within the College. The planning cycle requires a business case to be put forward to review existing provision and to support new programme proposals. Developments and standards are discussed regularly by the College's Higher Education Steering Group. Resources are allocated through an annual round of bidding for capital projects or through a departmental allocation, and are considered by the Executive Group. Resourcing needs and usage is reviewed through the annual monitoring and self-assessment processes. This approach to the provision of learning opportunities, resources and support enables the College to meet Expectation B4 of the Quality Code.

2.28     The review team considered the effectiveness of the relevant College mechanisms by analysing strategy and policy documents, reports of annual monitoring and review activity, and by examining documentation. The review team also met with staff, including professional, academic and learning support staff, and talked to students about the ways in which the College enables them to develop and achieve.

2.29     The Higher Education Strategy provides a useful framework for the development and delivery of higher education within the College. The Higher Level Skills Strategy also informs the types of provision which the College might develop further, and the resource implications. The Higher Education Learning Centre Strategy clearly sets out the provision of resources to support study skills and digital literacy. This provides an increased emphasis on the use of e-resources. Staff work closely with student representatives to raise awareness of resources available to students both at the College and at the partner universities.

2.30     The College takes a strategic approach to the allocation of learning resources. These are allocated by means of an annual round of bidding for capital projects. Capital projects are analysed by the Vice Principal (Corporate Resources) on the basis of cost-effectiveness, as well as educational benefit. Shortlisted projects are considered by the Executive Group for final decision. Budgets are allocated to academic departments and central services to cover smaller items of expenditure. This sum covers external staff development, as well as physical resource items. Staff are confident that managers are able to meet the majority of reasonable requests from staff and students. The new Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy covers both further and higher education. It concentrates on stating strategic objectives, but provides little guidance for delivery or for optimising student higher level learning opportunities. There is a well developed Learning Resource Centre which provides a hub for student access to ICT equipment and resources in a wide range of media.

2.31     The Higher Education Quality Procedures Handbook outlines the quality mechanisms which monitor and evaluate the provision of resources and learning opportunities. These include the use of an annual self-assessment and review process, the Quality Improvement Plan, Quality Enhancement Policy and key performance indicators.

2.32     Much development work has taken place on the use of the VLE and use is now well embedded with a dedicated section for higher education. The learning resource centre has

recently been remodelled, including a dedicated higher education area, although students would like to see the zone expanded. Students are very appreciative of the industry-standard resources available to support the FdA Music and Production programme based at the Waterloo Campus.

2.33     There is an effective tutorial system, including regular group and termly personal tutorials. Students find tutorials very helpful, and those with particular needs feel very well supported. It is unclear how the effectiveness of the tutorial system is monitored and evaluated at strategic level. Some students also undertake personal development planning as required by the degree-awarding bodies, although the use of this is not embedded systematically. Students stated that further help with career planning and CV writing would be welcomed.

2.34     Overall, the review team found sound evidence that there are effective processes to monitor and evaluate resources and support mechanisms which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Expectation B4 is therefore 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**

2.35    A range of methods ensure that students are able to provide feedback on their educational experience. Each programme has an elected course representative who attends programme committee meetings and departmental forums and provides feedback to delivery staff.

2.36    The College holds a cross-College student forum for all students, chaired by the Principal. Additionally, two dedicated higher education student forums have taken place. These forums enable representatives to raise a range of discussions including individual examples of good teaching or areas for improvement. The College's link governor for higher education takes an active role in monitoring provision and has met informally with students and staff, and provides verbal updates to governors. These arrangements enable the College to meet Expectation B5 of the Quality Code.

2.37    The review team considered the methods in place for student engagement, including policies, minutes of programme committees, discussions with students and student representatives, and talks with academic and support staff and the lead student representative.

2.38    Tutorials and end of year course feedback is used routinely on programmes. The College plans for all students to complete module evaluation questionnaires although at present these are inconsistently undertaken. Each programme's annual self-assessment report is informed by a range of views including those of students, gathered from formal surveys, learner forum meetings, participation in course team meetings and internal inspection focus groups. Students on part-time and evening programmes are sometimes unable to attend forums and meetings due to work and personal commitments, although programme-level representation allows good opportunities to provide feedback.

2.39    Students complete up to three surveys a year on induction, learning and teaching and the wider student experience. However, there is little evidence of how surveys are used, and no analysis is undertaken. Eligible students also complete the National Student Survey. The process for ensuring comprehensive use and evaluation of feedback mechanisms is unclear and some annual programme reviews do not explicitly reflect on student responses. A 'You Said We Did' mechanism is used to report feedback to the student body. While there is some dissemination of feedback on issues raised by students, this is less effective at College level than it is within programmes.

2.40    The process for student representation is not monitored and there is little evidence that the College reviews the effectiveness of the system, or ensures that this is consistent in practice. Programme team meeting minutes often do not include student representatives, although there is evidence that they are invited. The review team **recommends** that by September 2015 the College develops and embeds consistent monitoring and review of its approach to student engagement. There is an active students' union, which has two officers who sit on a range of College committees including the Higher Education Student Forum, although they are not listed in the terms of reference. The current president of the students' union is a student on a higher education programme who also has a part-time paid role within the College as Student Liaison Officer. .

2.41      While there is informal student involvement at all levels within the College, no students are currently formal members of the College's deliberative bodies where higher education is considered. The lead student representative has, however, been invited to attend meetings of the Higher Education Steering Group. The review team **recommends** that by September 2015 the College increases the involvement of students in the formal quality assurance and enhancement processes at all levels, and uses feedback to inform improvements. This matter is also addressed in Enhancement.

2.42      Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met but that risk in this area is moderate. While students are able to make their views heard, there are further opportunities to formalise students' involvement in the deliberative processes for quality assurance and enhancement, and for using feedback more effectively to improve the student experience.

**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

2.43     Learning outcomes and assessment details are published in module and programme specifications. These are available on the VLE and in programme handbooks. Teaching staff are guided in their assessment practice through the newly introduced Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and the Higher Education Assessment Handbook. Foundation degree programme assessments are subject to the assessment regulations of the degree-awarding bodies. Processes are in place to ensure that assessment is reliable. External examiners' reports confirm that assessments are appropriate and programmes meet the relevant academic standards. These policies and procedures relating to assessment, together with their application by teaching staff, enable the College to meet Expectation B6 of the Quality Code.

2.44     The review team examined the recently introduced Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and Higher Education Assessment Handbook, minutes of examination boards and external examiner reports, and held meetings with students, programme leaders and teaching staff.

2.45     The College's stated approach to assessment is based on local practice within programme teams, implementing standards laid down by awarding bodies and articulating with external frameworks wherever necessary. All assessments are internally verified before provisional marks are given to students, and external examiners ratify samples of assessment briefs. Double marking, anonymous marking and an effective internal verification system in place. The College attends progression and awards boards at the partner universities. Extenuating circumstances procedures are described in the Student Handbook. The College does not directly engage in the processes for the recognition of prior learning, and when cases arise they refer the matter to the relevant awarding body for decision.

2.46     As a Pearson-approved centre, the College follows the guidance provided including the use of an internal verifier for each programme. An external examiner appointed by Pearson attends to sample work and meet students, although there is no College policy or procedures for assessment boards for Pearson programmes. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that by April 2015 the College introduce and embed a policy and procedures for assessment boards for Pearson programmes.

2.47     Students indicate that they know what is expected of them in assessment. They have a clear understanding of the intended learning outcomes for their programme. Assessment becomes progressively challenging as they move through their programmes. Assessment feedback is in the main timely, useful and developmental. However, there is some evidence of assessment bunching and lack of planning of assessment activities. There is considerable variability across programmes regarding the variety of assessment tasks set. Students on some programmes consider assessment tasks to be repetitive and lacking in variation, and would appreciate engaging with a greater variety of methods.

2.48    The Director of Teaching, Learning and Assessment is responsible for gathering moderation reports from awarding bodies and reviewing the feedback to course teams. The newly introduced Higher Education Assessment Handbook provides helpful principles of assessment and guidance for assessment practice, assessment of projects, work-based and work-related learning, and group, self and peer assessment. However, there is little evidence to demonstrate how the College has effective oversight of assessment practice although staff spoke of the increasing use of guidance provided. The review team **affirms** the steps taken to implement and embed the assessment principles and guidelines outlined in the Higher Education Assessment Handbook to enhance the variety and validity of assessment practice.

2.49    Overall, policies and procedures for assessment of students and recognition of prior learning are in place and effective, although further work is in place to enhance the variety of assessment. Further work needs to take place on the development of specific policies and procedures for Pearson programmes. Students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit. Therefore, the team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the associated 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

2.50     All programmes have external examiners who are nominated and appointed by the degree-awarding bodies or by Pearson. External examiners are required to follow the regulations determined by the universities or by Pearson. Arrangements for training and monitoring of examiners remains the responsibility of the awarding bodies/organisation. External examiners visit the College every year to review academic standards and student work and attend the assessment boards. External examiners' reports are integrated into the annual monitoring and self-evaluation processes at the College and inform action plans. The College is responsible for providing external examiners with the information, documentation and evidence they request, and for complying with their recommendations. The use made of external examiners enables the College to meet Expectation B7 of the Quality Code.

2.51     The team scrutinised selected external examiners' reports, looked at relevant policies on the induction of examiners and minutes of relevant committees and correspondence, and held meetings with staff and students. The team tested how examiners' reports are used as part of the annual monitoring processes and responded to by the College. The team talked with staff, awarding body representatives and students, including student representatives, about the sharing of external examiner reports.

2.52     The College's partner universities and Pearson provide handbooks and an induction for external examiners. Link tutors send examiners' reports to programme managers, who discuss them with staff teams. Action points and good practice feed into annual monitoring and self-assessment reports. External examiners' reports are also scrutinised by the College's Quality Unit, which produces a list of actions for teams to consider. University partners respond formally to all external examiners. The process for oversight of collective feedback from external examiner reports is not clear and the College does not produce a summary report.

2.53     Students have variable access to external examiners' reports. The College does not routinely provide students with reports, but many students access reports through the VLE at the College or at their partner university. Some programme handbooks include the name and affiliation of external examiners; other external examiners are profiled on the VLE.

2.54     Overall, the review team considers that use of external examiners is robust. Staff consider reports to be helpful and clear. All reports are received in a timely manner which permits early integration of action points into both annual monitoring and self-assessment processes. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B7 is met and the risk in this area is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

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

**Quality Code,** *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*

**Findings**

2.55     The College's quality cycle and annual curriculum planning process links reviews of the previous year to curriculum planning for future cohorts. The College places reliance on the integrity of programme teams in evaluating the progress of the students and the provision offered. The Course Annual Review is at the core of this strategy and requires each programme team to reflect on its strengths and areas for improvement. This informs the production of a curriculum area self-assessment report and Quality Improvement Plan.

2.56     A recently introduced process for the annual monitoring of programmes is designed to ensure College level oversight of all programmes offered and cover all awarding bodies and Pearson. This process is supported by a newly introduced quality calendar and formalised in a Higher Education Quality Procedures Handbook. The Higher Education Steering Group has a remit to approve operational plans, new modules and programmes, quality assurance procedures, and the annual self-assessment report. The approach the College takes towards programme monitoring and review enables it to meet Expectation B8 of the Quality Code.

2.57     The review team considered the policies and procedures relating to monitoring and review as described in the Higher Education Quality Procedures Handbook, programme specifications and relevant sections of the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Policy. Documents considered included self-assessment reports and minutes of the Higher Education Steering Group. Meetings were also held with senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students.

2.58     Self-assessment reports are produced by the programme leader. Programmes are reviewed according to the recently developed quality calendar and informed by student feedback, external examiners' comments, student retention and achievement. Annual reports are discussed with the awarding bodies at an annual partnership review meeting, subject assessment panels and moderation meetings at subject level. The College relies on its university partners to ensure that local arrangements are fit for purpose and rigorous in the maintenance of standards. Self-assessment reports are also scrutinised by the subject area Assistant Principal who produces a self-assessment report and Quality Improvement Plan covering all elements of provision in that curriculum area.

2.59     The College's self-evaluation action plan indicates the need to clarify where reports are considered in the College reporting structure to provide a more effective oversight. The plan also highlights the need for programme reviews to be consistently produced, and for the College to consider these prior to submission to the awarding body. The terms of reference for the newly established Higher Education Steering Group identifies these responsibilities within its remit, although the effectiveness of this committee has yet to be tested through an annual cycle of review activity.

2.60     There are limited opportunities within the College to draw together the outcomes of the review of individual programmes to improve and enhance the higher education provision as a whole. The review team **recommends** that by June 2015 the College ensures the annual monitoring process provides more effective oversight of all programmes and the enhancement of provision (see also Expectations A3.3 and Enhancement).

2.61    Overall, there are processes in place for the routine monitoring of programmes. There is a lack of reference to relevant higher education external reference points, and limited oversight by the College. The deliberative structures and processes are recently introduced and their effectiveness is yet to be tested. The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.62     During induction, students are made aware by staff, and through their handbooks, how they can access the procedures and processes for complaints and appeals. Students confirm that they know what to do if they have a complaint or appeal, and understand the systems. The College manages the first stage of the complaints process, through the internal complaints and concerns process. Staff adhere to the awarding bodies' complaints and appeals procedures and the relevant university manages the appeals process. Students can speak to programme staff at an informal stage to resolve issues with their programmes, and concerns are often resolved promptly by staff. These informal concerns are not recorded or analysed at College level.

2.63     The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the arrangements for handling complaints and appeals by scrutinising policies, looking at published information, and at meetings with students and staff. In principle, the policies and procedures are appropriate to meet Expectation B9.

2.64     Within the last three years there have been no formal appeals or complaints as the College seeks to find resolution at any early stage. Not all students are aware of the process to raise issues more formally if they are unhappy with the informal stage, but felt confident that this information would be available through staff. Information within student handbooks on complaints and appeals is limited and does not always include required timescales. This matter is also addressed under Part C.

2.65     The team concludes that the College's process for complaints and appeals is fair, although further information and clarification could be provided for students. Expectation B9 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.66　　The College is responsible for the management of work experience and work placements in accordance with the requirements of its partner universities' policies. Some programmes delivered at the College, in teacher education and early years education, involve learning in an external work environment. There are isolated examples of placement learning being undertaken. The College currently has relatively few learning opportunities based within an external workplace, and therefore as risk is limited, the existing procedures allow Expectation B10 of the Quality Code to be met.

2.67　　The review team tested the College's approach to assuring the quality of placement and work-based learning by scrutinising responsibilities checklists, programme documentation, information for employers and annual monitoring reports. The team also spoke to programme, support and managerial staff, as well as to students.

2.68　　The initial teacher education programmes all include periods of working in an educational workplace. In FdA Early Years Education the majority of the students are part-time, and employed within their own workplace settings. Placements are found for students where this is not the case. For the College's other foundation degrees, work-based learning is not central to the programme and there is little engagement with structured workplace learning opportunities. HNC/D programmes do not routinely provide opportunities for integrated work placements. This matter is also addressed in the recommendation in Expectation B3 that the College further develops students' opportunities to engage with work-based and placement learning.

2.69　　The College does not have centralised processes for the organisation and management of learning delivered within the workplace or other external environments. The Work Experience Placement Assessment Form dates from 2010, and requires updating to ensure compliance with current legislation. There are no overarching written guidelines for the management of work-based and placement learning. Due diligence checks are not currently a consistent part of College processes. There is currently no standardised template for tripartite agreements between employers, students and the College, and learning agreements are not in use. The College hopes to introduce a customer relationship management system during 2014-15 to help to track students on placements with employers.

2.70　　The College does not currently have a systematic approach to providing information for employers and placement providers. The FdA Early Years Education programme produces a useful mentor training booklet. It also produces a template letter for employers, which sets out the responsibilities and seeks formal agreement for day release and the necessity for a workplace mentor. The FdA Business Information Technology produces an information bulletin for employers willing to participate in a live project to provide them with a free website. Staff also provide a project expectations document for potential industry mentors. However, the production of information for employers is all at a local level. It does not adhere to College branding guidelines and is not checked centrally for adherence to regulatory requirements. This matter is also addressed in Expectation B3.

2.71      The review team concludes that current localised arrangements, while having identified limitations in terms of overall management, monitoring and oversight, do not put the current programmes at risk. However, as workplace activity expands the College should consider the further formalisation of processes. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B10 is met and that the level of risk is low.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

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

**Quality Code,** *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

**Findings**

2.72     The College does not offer research degrees.

# The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.73 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All the Expectations have been met and the risk is moderate in four areas.

2.74 There is one example of good practice in Expectation B3 relating to the innovative use of technology and e-learning.

2.75 The team identified eight recommendations. Three of the recommendations relate to improvements that could be made to clarifying and strengthening structures, processes and procedures for managing, monitoring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. Two recommendations apply to involving students more formally in the deliberative processes, and reviewing the effectiveness of student engagement. The team also recommends steps to ensure that staff are further developed as higher education practitioners, that employers are more explicitly involved in programme design and review, and that further ways are considered by which students can be engaged in work-based and placement learning. Additionally the team affirms the action which the College is already undertaking to further embed assessment principles and guidelines.

2.76 The team considers that these recommendations will allow the College to address omissions and enhance oversight, but actions will not require structural change and do not represent serious risks to the management of this area.

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

# 3 Judgement: The quality of information about learning opportunities

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

**Quality Code, *Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision***

**Findings**

3.1 The College provides information for a wide range of stakeholders, including prospective students, current students, staff and employers. Information is made available through its website, prospectus, interviews and open days and key information sets on the Unistats website. The VLE holds electronic versions of student handbooks and external examiners' reports. The College's strategic vision and mission is made available to students and other stakeholders, and is communicated effectively through its brand and published information. The team reviewed a wide range of published information and material provided in hard copy and electronically. These procedures and protocols enable the College to meet Expectation C of the Quality Code.

3.2 The review team tested that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and scrutinised a wide range of information published in hard copy and electronically on the website and VLE. The team also had discussions with students and staff, including the marketing team.

3.3 The College confirmed that a new website and prospectus is currently being designed and will be in place for February 2015. At present website material is reviewed annually, but the College confirmed there will be a more regular process for checking accuracy when the new website is published. Teaching staff are currently uncertain about the process for correcting factual errors and inaccuracies.

3.4 Overall responsibility for this published information lies with the Head of Marketing. However, curriculum managers, in conjunction with assistant principals, are accountable for public information. Programme information is inputted into the management information system, and this data is then used to populate the website. Information made available to the public is not checked directly with the awarding body prior to it being made available on the College website. Students commented that information on the website was useful, accurate and accessible.

3.5 Information and resources for students are available mainly in electronic format. Comprehensive programme handbooks are provided to students electronically and are accessible through the College student portal. Assessment arrangements for each programme are set out in detail in the programme handbooks. Students are provided with full criteria describing the evidence required to demonstrate successful attainment of the intended learning outcomes. Programme handbooks clearly outline to the students how their programmes are reviewed and how quality is assured. Students are fully informed about the partnership between the College and the university partner and provided with a link to the College's student charter and the awarding body student charter..

3.6 College staff had little knowledge about the Expectation of Part C of the Quality Code and the review team were provided with no explicit evidence of its use within the College. The College website contains a number of errors and inaccuracies, including references to incorrect levels for awards, and the absence of awarding body information and

information about the level of study and duration of the programme. The review team **recommends** that by April 2015 the College develops and embeds an effective process to ensure that information is fit for purpose, accessible and accurate. This matter is also addressed in Expectation A2.2 regarding programme specifications for Pearson awards.

3.7        Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation C is met but that the associated risk is moderate. Staff have little understanding of the requirements of the Expectation and some information provided is at times inaccurate and incomplete. Students confirm, however, that the information provided to them is helpful and comprehensive.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:    Moderate**

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

3.8      In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area was met but the associated level of risk is moderate.

3.9      Staff have little understanding of the requirements of the Expectation in Part C of the Quality Code and some information provided is at times inaccurate and incomplete. Students confirm, however, that the information provided to them is helpful and comprehensive. Information published is generally fit for purpose and trustworthy. Processes for the development and verification of information are understood by staff, although these are not in a formalised policy. Programme specifications need to be more consistent and accessible to students and staff.

3.10     The review team therefore concludes that the quality of the information produced about its higher education 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's Higher Education Quality Enhancement Policy was approved in October 2014. The Policy states that the Higher Education Steering Group and the Quality Recovery Board will monitor the effectiveness of quality enhancement. This process is intended to ensure that appropriate and effective teaching, support and learning resources are provided for students. The Policy seeks to ensure that the quality of learning opportunities is evaluated, and that the College considers how improvements may be made. The enhancement process includes a Quality Calendar for 2014-15 which states that the Quality Recovery Board is responsible for monitoring the cross-College self-assessment process and Quality Improvement Plan. The Steering Group is responsible for monitoring the self-assessment reviews and improvement plans within each curriculum area.

4.2　The Higher Education Quality Enhancement Policy is intended to provide the strategic direction for enhancing students' learning opportunities. Additionally the quality assurance cycle and calendar provide support mechanisms for monitoring established priorities and agreed action plans. If the deliberative structures currently being put in place as part of the Policy requirements become embedded, and are effective, they have the potential to enable enhancement to take place at College level.

4.3　The review team considered the College's Higher Education Strategy, the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Policy and terms of reference and minutes from the newly constituted deliberative boards. The team reviewed relevant quality assurance documentation along with the procedures to monitor action plans. Meetings were held with the principal, senior staff, support staff, programme managers and teaching staff. These allowed for discussion about the quality assurance procedures and systems and enhancement activities.

4.4　The College states that its strategic intention is to take a more systematic approach to the enhancement of higher education provision. Evidence of how this enhancement might occur is contained in the Higher Education Quality Improvement Action Plan. However, staff seemed unaware of this plan, and of the enhancement activities that it identifies. The terms of reference for the governing body's Quality Recovery Board include the overarching intention to ensure the College does everything necessary rapidly to improve the quality of teaching and learning, ensure it is on a trajectory to sustainable excellence, and is meeting the needs of employers.

4.5　The Higher Education Quality Enhancement Policy contains a number of quality drivers intended to be used by curriculum managers and assistant principals in enhancing provision. These include external examiners' reports, student questionnaires, module feedback and evaluations, student representative feedback, stakeholder forums and student achievements. There is a clear line of accountability and performance monitoring by the Interim Vice Principal, the Steering Group and the Quality Recovery Board. However, at present these structures and processes are largely aspirational and their effectiveness has not been tested.

4.6　Enhancement is localised within individual curriculum areas, based on the annual monitoring and review processes required by the awarding bodies. Internal reporting processes are based on the cross-College self-assessment report and action plan which

covers both further and higher education. There is no separate reporting for the higher education provision.

4.7     A number of recent innovations are being implemented by the interim executive team. These have the potential to drive enhancement in the future, including the Student Involvement Strategy and the improvement practitioner network, which has a specific higher education focus. Recent developments include the higher education student zone in the learning resource centre, and the development of the VLE and access to tablet computers. The Waterloo Campus, where a major capital project is currently in progress, is seen as an appropriate campus for developing more higher education provision.

4.8     There is no overarching strategy for identifying and disseminating good practice, although the team were given examples of how this is done at subject level. Opportunities for sharing and disseminating good practice have previously occurred at a higher education forum. However, this group has recently been disbanded and there is no forum for teaching staff to interact and discuss higher education issues. The College's annual teaching, learning and assessment conference is largely focused on further education, and provides little guidance on developments and debates within the higher education sector.

4.9     The review team found that while the draft Higher Education Strategy includes key drivers and aims it does not effectively address enhancement issues. The targets contained in the strategy and in the improvement plan focus on the curriculum offer, success rates, progression and income generation. The strategy fails to demonstrate how the College will monitor its quality drivers and enable enhancement to be undertaken systematically. Discussions at the recently introduced Higher Education Steering Group are largely operational, and do not reflect a strategic approach to enhancing quality.

4.10    Staff provided good examples of individual activities which support improvements. However, they demonstrated limited understanding of the Higher Education Strategy, or its strategic aims or drivers, and were unable to articulate enhancement processes. Therefore, the team **recommends** that, by June 2015, the College develops and implements strategies to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.11    Overall, the College's approach to enhancement at programme level is based on quality assurance mechanisms, with insufficient measures at the provider level to promote systematic enhancement. Although there are some examples of improvement initiatives, there is limited cross-College oversight or leadership for enhancement. Planned processes for enhancement are under-developed and are not fully embedded, although some of the required actions are emerging. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation is not met and that, owing to the lack of a clear strategic approach to enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities, the associated level of risk is moderate.

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

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.12    In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified. The team considers that improvements are required for this Expectation to be met. The level of risk is deemed to be moderate as there are weaknesses in the College's approach. There is a lack of clarity about responsibilities and insufficient rigour in the operation of enhancement activities.

4.13    The College's approach to the monitoring and review of enhancement activity is at an emerging stage and steps to develop a strategy for enhancement are not yet embedded or widely understood. Enhancement is driven informally rather than systematically, often at programme rather than College level. Although there are some examples of improvement initiatives, there is limited cross-College oversight or leadership for enhancement. The planned processes for enhancement are under-developed and are not fully embedded.

4.14    Therefore, the team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

# 5    Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

## Findings

5.1    The College has aspirations to be become a leading College for employability and entrepreneurship. The process of rebuilding its formerly extensive network of employer links is underway to ensure that the curriculum offer is relevant to current and future needs of local and regional employment. However, there is little evidence of how a strategic approach to this is to be undertaken. Developments are supported by the recently formulated action plan for developing students' employability skills, and the College employs a specialist careers guidance officer to support higher education students in gaining employment. Employability is embedded in curriculum design and all programmes have a vocational focus and are designed to equip students to gain employment in a competitive market. The College does not explicitly define its approach to student employability and there is currently no employability strategy or shared expectations for developing students' employability skills.

5.2    Programme self-assessment reports identify the need to embed employability skills, and have their impact monitored, although this element is often not addressed in practice. Programme monitoring reports completed annually for University of Greenwich include a specific section on employability

5.3    There is evidence of teaching staff from individual programmes entering into dialogue with individual employers on an informal basis. However, there is no systematic approach for programmes or curriculum areas to participate in regular forums with employers. The College has recently become a member of the Linking London, Lifelong Learning Network which provides useful links for the performing arts curriculum area.

5.4    The College makes some use of employers to provide live projects for individuals, and groups of students. Some members of staff are also practising professionals, which provides a direct link with the world of work. Individual programmes organise industry-based speakers to visit the College, and students are taken on visits to workplaces and external industry-led events. One good example is a recent visit to a national learning technology event by students on FdA Early Years Education, where an innovation was brought back and developed within the curriculum.

5.5    In early years and teacher training, students are either existing employees or undertaking mandatory placements. For other programmes there is little systematic engagement with learning in the external workplace. Students indicated that they would like greater interaction with employers and the workplace. They are aware of the necessity to develop skills and attributes for employment and appreciate that their programmes develop skills and attributes needed in the professional world. The College has introduced software for e-portfolios, with the intention of using this further to support personal development planning and the articulation of employability skills.

# 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 27-29 of the Higher Education Review 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Multiple awards**
An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

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

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

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

**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 for higher education qualifications** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**. See also **academic standards**.

**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.