Higher Education Review of Lincoln College

March 2015

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Lincoln College. The review took place from 17 to 20 March 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Sylvia Hargreaves
- Professor Hastings McKenzie
- Mr Mark Napier (student reviewer)

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Lincoln College 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 3. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

In reviewing Lincoln College 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 June 2016

Introduction

In March 2015, Lincoln College underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in 'meets UK expectations' for the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations; the quality of student learning opportunities; and the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The College also received a judgement of 'does not meet UK expectations' for the quality of the information about learning opportunities.

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 November 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 three progress updates and culminated in a desk-based analysis by a reviewer of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence.

The desk-based analysis confirmed that the recommendation relating to the quality of information about learning opportunities had been successful addressed.

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

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 recommendation as follows.

Recommendation – Expectation C
To ensure the production of a new set of accurate and consistent information about the College's higher education programmes, the College undertook an audit of existing programme information and created a new centralised database for programme publicity information. There is a revised system for signing off all new programmes and the collation of relevant programme information, and checks for accuracy and final signoff for publication in print and online. The process includes a check on information accuracy with the relevant awarding partner prior to final publication. To ensure that all staff are aware of the revised processes and procedures, with a particular emphasis on the new CMA guidelines, a series of training events were provided to staff involved in the administration and delivery of higher education. The College intends to continue with periodic audits of programme information to ensure continued accuracy and consistency.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Lincoln College

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **does not meet** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Lincoln College.

By July 2015:

- review and implement procedures to ensure that all information, including existing publicity material, is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectation C).

By September 2015:

- ensure student involvement in programme approval processes (Expectation B1)
- provide opportunities for student representation on all higher education deliberative structures and ensure that representatives are suitably prepared for their roles (Expectation B5).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The action taken by the College to develop a definitive set of assessment regulations for Pearson programmes (Expectations A2.1 and B6).

Theme: Student Employability

Lincoln College is committed to developing and enhancing students' professional, vocational and employability skills through a range of opportunities for work-based or work-related learning and the development of employability skills, both within and outside the formal curriculum. Some programmes require students to complete short work placements and modules incorporating work experience. Where work experience is not integrated into the formal curriculum, there are opportunities for students to undertake volunteering activity in the workplace and to gain credit by completing employability-based modules. Some students, particularly those undertaking sports courses, have the opportunity to gain additional vocational qualifications. Course teams help promote students' opportunities for work experience by maintaining strong links with employers. A high proportion of students feel that they have been well, or very well, prepared for employment.

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

About Lincoln College

Lincoln College (the College) is a large further education college with three campuses in Lincolnshire. Higher education is delivered at its Monks Road campus in Lincoln city centre. In 2014-15, there are 264 full-time and 175 part-time higher education students at the College. Its mission is 'Raising aspirations, realising potential and delivering success.' The strategic and operational direction of the College's higher education provision is set out in its Higher Education Strategy and Higher Education Enhancement Plan. The College's vision for higher education is to have 'great teachers, exciting courses, inspired graduates.'

The College is part of the Lincoln College Group, comprising two school academies (the Newark Academy and the Gainsborough Academy) and three colleges in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as a lead sponsor for the Lincoln University Technical College.

The organisation and composition of the senior management team of the Lincoln College Group and the College have recently been reviewed and restructured, and further changes are envisaged. In August 2014, the Principal and CEO of the College retired, and as a replacement the Board of Corporation appointed a Chief Executive to the Group. Currently, under the new organisational structure, the Managing Director Education and Training Delivery, whose role encompasses responsibility for the Lincoln College Group academies and colleges, holds ultimate responsibility for the academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement of the College's higher education provision. College-wide operational responsibility for higher education rests with the Director of the School of Sport, Care and the Arts, who reports to the Managing Director Education and Training Delivery.

At the time of the previous QAA review in 2010, the College worked with four validating universities. Since then it has strategically reduced the number of its validating partners to the two local universities, the University of Lincoln and Bishop Grosseteste University. The College also offers Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals. In 2012, the College and the University of Lincoln negotiated the transfer of five honours degrees to the College's portfolio, including the transfer of University members of staff.

The College received a positive outcome in its 2010 review report, with a number of features of good practice and five desirable recommendations. The review team considers that the College has made a satisfactory response to the recommendations and features of good practice still mainly feature as extant practice.

Explanation of the findings about Lincoln College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and 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 validating universities require programmes of study leading to their respective awards to be approved under university processes prior to delivery at the College. Pearson applies its ratification processes to its Higher National qualifications and, in addition, requires approval to be undertaken by the College prior to delivery of programmes leading to its awards. These various processes provide for: the positioning of qualifications at the appropriate level of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ); consideration of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements; the design of programmes to align with the relevant credit framework; and the award of qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined learning outcomes.

1.2   Reporting templates for the University of Lincoln ask external examiners to confirm that the academic standards set for the awards accord with the FHEQ and any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The Pearson external examiner reporting template asks for confirmation that the standards set are appropriate to the qualification level. External examiners for the Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU) programme are appointed by BGU to verify academic standards.

1.3   Awarding body monitoring and review processes are designed to ensure the maintenance of the academic standards of the respective awards delivered by the College.

1.4   The design of the programme approval, monitoring and review processes, and the requirements for external examiner reporting with respect to the College's higher education provision, allow Expectation A1 to be met.

1.5   The review team tested the Expectation through consideration of programme approval, monitoring and review documentation; definitive programme documentation; and external examiner reports, and in meetings with staff.

1.6   Programme approval documentation and definitive programme documentation for the College's higher education provision confirms the positioning of qualifications at the appropriate level of the FHEQ, consideration of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the design of programmes to align with the relevant credit framework, and the award of qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined learning outcomes. The qualifications are named in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications.

1.7   External examiners for the University of Lincoln and Pearson programmes report on and confirm alignment with relevant qualifications frameworks. No BGU external examiner reports are currently available, as the programme is in its first academic year.

1.8   The College complies with its contractual obligations in meeting University of Lincoln and Pearson requirements with respect to their monitoring and review processes, which test and confirm the maintenance of academic standards. No evidence of annual monitoring or review is currently available for the BGU programme, as it is in its first year.

1.9   Staff involved in the design of programmes have a knowledge and understanding of external reference points. Expectations and requirements regarding their use are reinforced at the Higher Education Forum, where good practice on programme design is shared.

1.10   Processes for ensuring the alignment of programmes with national qualifications frameworks for higher education, national credit frameworks for higher education and Subject Benchmark Statements work effectively. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.11   Under the new organisational structure, the Managing Director Education and Training Delivery, whose role encompasses responsibility for the Lincoln College Group academies and colleges, holds ultimate responsibility for the academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement of the College's higher education provision. The Director of the School of Sport, Care and the Arts, who reports to the Managing Director Education and Training Delivery, has College-wide operational responsibility for higher education. The Higher Education Programme Manager, who has a quality assurance remit, reports to the Director of the School of Sport, Care and the Arts.

1.12   The formal agreements with the respective universities stipulate that the relevant programmes are subject to the awarding bodies' quality assurance procedures and regulations and set out the respective awarding bodies' responsibilities, including the appointment of external examiners, conducting boards of examiners, moderation of students' assessed work, and the appointment of programme Link Tutors. Requirements and responsibilities relating to the Pearson programmes, including the role of the external examiners (appointed by the awarding body), internal verification of assessment design, moderation of students' assessed work, and the College's conduct of boards of examiners are set out in a range of Pearson documents.

1.13   Under the contractual arrangements, the College has responsibility for day-to-day programme management and annual reporting to the awarding bodies. The College is required to appoint a programme leader for each of the awarding bodies' programmes, with responsibility for programme organisation and delivery, and to establish a Course Committee for each university programme or suite of cognate programmes.

1.14   The College Quality Standards Committee (QSC), which is the College's senior academic authority, is charged with ensuring College compliance with internal and external requirements, including the requirements of the higher education awarding bodies. The QSC reports directly to the Board of Governors and is Chaired by the Managing Director Education and Training Delivery. Its membership includes the Higher Education Programme Manager, Directors of School, the President of the Students' Union and representatives from the Newark and Gainsborough campuses.

1.15   The College's monthly Higher Education Forum, which is open to all staff delivering and managing the College's higher education provision, and at which all higher education course teams must be represented, is established for cross-College discussion, communication, and sharing good practice. While it has no formal reporting role, the Higher Education Forum is characterised by the College as integral to its quality framework.

1.16   The respective university assessment regulations apply to the relevant programmes. Pearson sets out an assessment regulation framework for its awards. It also requires approved centres to develop and publish their own assessment regulations. The College's Higher Education Examination Boards are charged with making

recommendations on student progression and awards in accordance with the assessment, progression and award regulations as prescribed by the relevant awarding/validating body.

1.17   Overall, the College's academic framework governing the award of academic credit and qualifications allows Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.18   The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the processes in operation through scrutiny of contractual and other formal documentation, and minutes of meetings, and in meetings with staff.

1.19   The College's new senior management structure provides a suitable framework for managing the standards and quality of the College's higher education provision. However, it is too early to test the effectiveness of the operation of this framework. Moreover, in light of further proposed restructuring, the details of which are not yet clearly defined, the review team is unable to form a view as to the appropriateness or effectiveness of any future senior management arrangements for the oversight of the College's higher education provision. In accordance with awarding body requirements, the College has in place Programme Managers for each subject area and Programme Coordinators for each of the higher education programmes.

1.20   The QSC maintains College oversight of academic standards through consideration of the Higher Education Annual Monitoring Report (HEAMR). The College's HEAMR template requires confirmation that academic standards are maintained, as evidenced by external examiner reports and university scrutiny. Drawing on this evidence and on Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, completed HEAMRs confirm the maintenance of standards.

1.21   At programme level, higher education Course Committees are in place and, supported by College guidance on agenda planning, work effectively to monitor academic standards, including consideration of external examiner reports, assessment processes and student progress.

1.22   College course teams produce Annual Programme Monitoring Reports using the templates provided by the University of Lincoln and Pearson. There are currently no annual reports relating to the BGU programme, which is in its first academic year. The templates require commentary on external examiner feedback, and completed templates report external examiner confidence in the rigour of the College's assessment processes in securing the maintenance of academic standards.

1.23   Discussion at the Higher Education Forum ranges widely over the College's higher education provision, including matters concerned with academic standards, such as the currency and updating of programme specifications, internal College higher education boards of examiners processes, the production of the HEAMR and the progress of the HEAMR action plan.

1.24   In making recommendations on student progression and awards to the University of Lincoln, the College's Higher Education Examination Board applies the awarding body's assessment, progression and award regulations.

1.25   For Pearson programmes, the College applies assessment regulations drawn from three separate sources: the Pearson framework, the relevant programme specification, and the College's Student Assessment and Appeals Policy and Procedures. The College does not have in place a single set of definitive assessment regulations for the Pearson programmes. Pearson external examiners, who receive Examination Board minutes, have made no adverse comment on this practice but, rather, confirm that Examination Board procedures are thorough and comprehensive. Nonetheless, during the review, the College acknowledged the need for action and produced proposed draft BTEC assessment

regulations. Notwithstanding its intention to take action, the College does not currently comply with its obligations under the Pearson arrangements in this respect. The review team **affirms** the action taken by the College to develop a definitive set of assessment regulations for Pearson programmes.

1.26   Through its management structures and academic governance framework, the College effectively discharges most of its responsibilities for maintaining the standards of the awarding bodies' qualifications. For Pearson programmes, the current practice of applying assessment regulations drawn from more than one source gives rise to a lack of transparency while the College takes steps to develop a definite set of regulations.
The review team concluded that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate due to the shortcomings in the rigour to which Pearson procedures are applied until the steps being taken to develop a definitive set of regulations are completed.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.27 The awarding bodies, the University of Lincoln and BGU, are responsible for keeping definitive records of the programmes they validate. For its awarding organisation awards, the College is responsible for producing contextualised versions of Pearson programme specification. In both cases, the College is responsible for making these available to students and ensuring they are used as a reference point for the delivery and assessment of programmes, and throughout the monitoring and review process.

1.28 In designing and validating higher education programmes, the University of Lincoln, BGU and Pearson ensure relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) are addressed. The programmes validated by Pearson have been created using standard module options and are monitored annually for viability, quality assurance and resource provision. It is the College's responsibility to comply with the University of Lincoln and BGU's annual monitoring, external examining and internal/external moderation activity to provide evidence that is compliant with the validating bodies' academic standards for programme management, delivery and assessment. The process used by Pearson to approve programmes is a course approval panel, which checks learning outcomes and relates to external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements and the Quality Code. Checks are made that assessments and resources are appropriate at validation events. Pearson monitors compliance to academic standards through the annual external monitoring of its programmes, and through the College's internal annual programme monitoring procedures.

1.29 In order to test this Expectation, the review team reviewed the self-evaluation document, programme specifications for the awarding bodies and organisation awards, information for students, and information for staff, and discussed the use and availability of programme specifications with staff and students, and the management of programme information with senior staff.

1.30 The College maintains a definitive record for all programmes and qualifications that it currently delivers. These programme specifications operate on a clear and standardised template. It is the responsibility of individual Course Coordinators to ensure programme specifications are available to students via the virtual learning environment (VLE); this is checked through regular auditing of the VLE by the Higher Education Programme Manager.

1.31 Students have access to definitive programme specifications, which detail intended learning outcomes; this is directly disseminated to students through the VLE. Course information copied from the programme specification is also made available to students in their Higher Education Handbooks. Students were broadly aware of programme specifications, and knew where to find them, either in handbooks or via the VLE, understanding that they are the definitive document pertaining to their courses with details such as pass marks and progression arrangements.

1.32 Programme specifications for University of Lincoln awards are held electronically within an Academic Programme Management System and updated centrally as part of

programme modification and revalidation processes. The system generates programme specifications for each academic year. It is these versions that are copied by Course Coordinators for use in College documents. The review team found a small number of examples where significantly out-of-date programme specifications were available to students on the VLE. In these cases, the programme specification had not been replaced by the most recent validated/revalidated version of the document.

1.33   Overall, the review team concludes that the College makes programme specifications available to students and ensures their use as a reference point for the delivery and assessment of programmes. The team found a small number of cases where electronic versions of programme specifications were out of date, representing minor oversight in the process of monitoring resources available to students. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.34   The College runs programmes validated by two awarding bodies and one awarding organisation. As such, the College is dependent upon the awarding partners' approval processes and they are responsible for setting and maintaining academic standards at a level that meets the UK threshold. The processes of the College's two university partners include the convening of formal programme approval and re-approval events. The College also undergoes a Pearson approval process prior to the delivery of any Higher National courses. All three awarding partners are responsible for appointing external examiners for the programmes delivered by the College.

1.35   The College has an internal quality assurance process to ensure their assessments are fit for purpose and align with module learning outcomes. This process is internally audited on an annual basis by the College. The external examiners also sample student work to check and report on standards.

1.36   The College recently introduced an internal programme approval process to be undertaken prior to formal programme approval and delivery. This process requires the School proposing a new programme to complete the College's Approval of New Higher Education Courses Form. Consideration of whether the intended programme has been aligned with the FHEQ, and if it has been developed in consideration of the Quality Code, is required in order to complete the Form. To gain College approval, the form requires sign off by the Curriculum Strategy Team and the Chair of the QSC.

1.37   This process for the approval of taught programmes meets the Expectation in theory. The review team reviewed documentation available from the College and the awarding bodies in reaching its final conclusions and was able to meet with and question students and staff from the College, and the awarding bodies.

1.38   The College was able to evidence the participation of its staff and relevant employers in events to validate University of Lincoln programmes. College staff were not involved in the formal approval of the Higher National Diploma in Education and Training. Pearson Higher National awards are constructed from off-the-shelf modules and do not require approval of any specialist elements of the programmes.

1.39   The role of the Curriculum Strategy Team is pivotal in programme approval and re-approval. While evidence was available of Curriculum Strategy Team deliberations regarding programme approval, the use of the formal approval process was not well established. The review team was provided with one example of where the Approval of New Higher Education Courses Form had been used to consider the approval of the Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Travel and Tourism Management. However, it was evident that there was a misalignment between the timing of the approval process and the production of marketing material. For example, at the time of the review the College was advertising a Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Applied Biology that had not yet received internal approval.

1.40   Programmes delivered by the College are also accredited annually by professional bodies, including the Sports Therapy Association, the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board, and the European Herbal and Traditional Practitioners Association. These bodies provide further confirmation regarding the appropriateness of programme standards.

1.41   Overall, the review team found that the formal approval processes ensured that academic standards for each programme were set at a level that met the UK threshold. The team also found that the College's quality assurance process operates effectively, and this, together with the routine consideration of external examiner reports by course teams as part of the annual monitoring process, ensures that these standards are maintained during delivery.

1.42   The awarding partners are responsible for the academic standards of their awards and the College demonstrated that the operational implementation of its functions to maintain those standards was adequate. As such, when potential issues regarding the maintenance of academic standards were identified the existing processes were sufficient to ensure that standards were not put at risk. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.43   The awarding bodies are responsible for setting and maintaining the academic standards of the programmes delivered by the College. Each has processes independent of the College for designing and approving their programmes.

1.44   The College adheres to the assessment regulations of its partner universities, and course team members attend university-convened Assessment Boards.

1.45   Achievement of Pearson programme learning outcomes is determined by reference to BTEC assessment criteria and grade descriptors, and this information is made explicit to students in assessment briefs. Regulations for the assessment of Pearson programmes are determined by referring to: the BTEC guide to assessment levels 4 to 7, the student appeals and complaints procedure, and the relevant programme specifications. The College convenes its own Assessment Boards for its Pearson awards, in accordance with its Higher Education Examination Boards Terms of Reference, and conduct the Boards in the presence of external examiners.

1.46   All assessment items are verified internally, adhering to the College's own quality assurance process. The outcomes of this process are formally reviewed by the relevant external examiners and the College internally audits the process on an annual basis. External examiners are also asked to assess the validity and reliability of assessment strategies and to verify assessments prior to issuing.

1.47   All of the College's programmes are subject to annual monitoring. For university validated programmes, Annual Programme Monitoring Reports are produced, along with associated action plans. For Pearson programmes, a Self-Assessment Report is produced and accompanied by a Quality Improvement Plan. The Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, Self-Assessment Reports and associated action plans produced at programme level are approved at School-level and collated by the Higher Education Programme Manager, who combines them into a College HEAMR and Quality Improvement Plan, which are considered by the QSC. The validated programme Annual Programme Monitoring Reports are also received by the Link Tutors of the partner universities, who produce an additional report on the provision delivered at the College. The Link Tutors use these reports to formally feed into the university processes and provide feedback, which is also considered during production of the HEAMR.

1.48   The processes established by the College and its awarding partners to ensure the achievement of relevant learning outcomes, and to confirm that academic standards have been met, meet the Expectation in theory. The review team reviewed documentation provided by the College and available from the awarding partners in reaching its final

conclusions and was able to meet and question staff from the College and the university partners, and students.

1.49   The annual monitoring process had effective external input from both of the university partners, PRSBs, and external examiners. Tutors also produce end of module reports for University of Lincoln programmes that critically reflect upon student performance and student feedback. These forms use both qualitative and quantitative data to reflect on the validity of assessments and the standards achieved. These forms, along with information derived from the National Student Survey, also inform the annual monitoring process, which has effective oversight from the QSC. The review team determined that the annual monitoring process was active in monitoring and maintaining academic standards.

1.50   For the programmes validated by the two partner universities the College adheres to the respective assessment regulations. Students are aware of these regulations and have access to relevant documentation online. College staff attend university convened Assessment Boards along with external examiners. Both staff and students have online access to external examiner reports.

1.51   The College convenes its own Assessment Boards for Pearson programmes attended by staff and external examiners, and the reports of the externals are published online for staff and students. Appropriately detailed minutes are taken at these boards. Pearson external examiners confirm that the Examination Board procedures are thorough and comprehensive. The College does not have a single set of assessment regulations in place for its Pearson programmes, as noted under Expectations A2.1 and B6, and applies assessment regulations drawn from three separate sources. The review team affirms the action being taken by the College to produce a definitive set of assessment regulations for these programmes. Relevant assessment information for Higher Nationals is made available to students in assessment briefs and programme specifications.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.53   The awarding partners are responsible for the design, formal approval, and review of the higher education programmes delivered at the College. The partner universities undertake approval and periodic re-approval of the validated programmes that the College delivers and Pearson approves each application to run one of their Higher National qualifications at the College. The College does not undertake periodic reviews of its higher education provision but it does undertake annual monitoring. The College does not operate a formal process for programme termination.

1.54   Annual monitoring processes at the College require each course to reflect upon the academic year via a Self-Assessment Report for Pearson awards and an Annual Programme Monitoring Report for the programmes validated by their partner universities. The reports, produced at programme level and approved by the Schools, provide course performance data, student feedback, employer feedback, staff reflections, external examiner reports and action plans for improvement. Information from these reports subsequently feeds into the College's HEAMR. The HEAMR includes a College-wide Quality Improvement Plan using data and information drawn from programme level annual monitoring. Progress against action plans is then overseen by the QSC and monitored by Course Committees.

1.55   Course staff from the College attend annual Examination Boards at the University of Lincoln. At the time of the review an Assessment Board had yet to sit for the recently introduced Diploma in Education and Training with BGU. The College convenes its own Assessment Boards for Pearson programmes, attended by its staff and external examiners and Chaired by a senior member of College staff.

1.56   The PSRBs associated with the Herbal Medicine, Acupuncture and Sports Therapy programmes (the European Herbal and Traditional Practitioners Association, British Acupuncture Accreditation Board, and Sport Therapy Association) conduct annual external reviews of the programmes. Academic standards are considered during these paper based reviews alongside a range of other set criteria.

1.57   The processes undertaken for the monitoring and review of programmes meet the Expectation in theory. The review team reviewed documentation provided by the College, and in reaching its final conclusions was able to meet with and question College and university staff, and students.

1.58   Appropriate evidence of annual monitoring was available for all programmes run by the College. Self-Assessment Report and Annual Programme Monitoring Report templates are made available for the production of reports, and exemplar reports are available to assist in their production. The production of these reports by the Schools was timely and included appropriate external input from both of the university partners and the National Student Survey, and considered module reports for University of Lincoln programmes, and the reports from PRSBs and external examiners. The College Link Tutors provide the University Link Tutors with Annual Programme Monitoring Reports for the validated courses, which enable them to contribute to the annual monitoring processes of the universities.

The College also receives feedback from the universities that, along with the Self-Assessment Reports and Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, is used by the Higher Education Programme Manager to inform production of the HEAMR for the QSC.

1.59   Through inspection of reports and action plans, responses to external examiners, and QSC and Course Committee minutes, and from talking to College staff, the review team determined that the annual monitoring process was active in monitoring and maintaining academic standards and that adequate deliberative processes were in place to ensure that reports were completed in a timely manner. As such, there was evidence that the College reviewed the alignment of academic standards with the UK threshold and to those of its degree-awarding bodies.

1.60   The College relies upon its university partners' quality assurance processes to review the validated provision and address any issues regarding the maintenance of academic standards. There was adequate evidence of College staff involvement in these reviews. The College did not review its Pearson qualifications once approved and it did not have a formal process by which to terminate an award.

1.61   There was also evidence that the College considered the views of industry and relevant employers in the design of its programmes, particularly those in the area of Complementary Medicine and Sports. College staff also had a good working relationship with university Link Tutors, and were responsive to and knowledgeable of university quality assurance requirements and the expectations of Pearson. The recent production of a staff Higher Education Handbook also proved helpful in this respect.

1.62   The review team determined that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes were effectively implemented and enabled degree-awarding body and UK threshold academic standards to be maintained. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.63   The College's validating universities require programmes of study leading to their respective awards to be approved under university processes prior to delivery at the College. Pearson applies its ratification processes to its Higher National qualifications and, in addition, requires approval to be undertaken by the College prior to delivery of programmes leading to its awards. The university processes provide for appropriate externality in programme approval and review. Pearson requires vocational professional input in both programme design and delivery.

1.64   External and independent expertise is also provided by external examiners, who are asked to confirm that academic standards are set and maintained; the Pearson Regional Quality Manager; university Link Tutors; and employers; and through review by the PSRBs that accredit some of the College's programmes (the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board, the European Herbal and Traditional Practitioners Association, and the Sports Therapy Association).

1.65   The design of the arrangements for the use of external and independent expertise at key stages of the setting and maintaining of academic standards allows the Expectation to be met.

1.66   The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of documentary evidence, including legal agreements, programme approval and review documentation, PSRB review documents, external examiner and Link Tutor reports, and in meetings with staff.

1.67   The review team found that external and independent expertise is used appropriately in programme approval and review, including PSRB representative input, where relevant. university Link Tutors and employers participate in discussions with course teams on programme design and development.

1.68   External examiners for the University of Lincoln and Pearson programmes report on the setting and maintaining of academic standards, and confirm that appropriate standards are set, delivered and achieved. External examiner reports also consider the standards requirements of relevant PSRBs and confirm that these are achieved or exceeded. External examiners for the Pearson programmes report discussions with programme teams on the use and development of assessment instruments, and confirm vocational professional input into programme delivery. The College has effective systems for responding to and acting upon comment from external examiners, who note the receptiveness of programme teams to their feedback. As the Diploma in Education and Training is in its first academic year, external examiner reports of BGU are not yet available.

1.69   The European Herbal and Traditional Practitioners Association and the Sports Therapy Association representatives and panels undertake monitoring and review visits throughout the year; the Sports Therapy Association undertakes an annual re-accreditation

process; and the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board makes annual quality visits. Recorded outcomes confirm that the relevant programmes continue to satisfy accreditation criteria.

1.70   The review team found that the College uses external and independent expertise effectively at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.72   The College works effectively with its partner universities and Pearson in the maintenance of academic standards. The relevant university quality assurance frameworks are used and adhered to. The College has mechanisms to ensure standards are maintained and appropriate use is made of external expertise where appropriate.

1.73   All Expectations in this area are met with low risk apart from A2.1, the use of academic frameworks and regulations to award academic credit and qualifications, where there is a moderate risk arising from the need to adhere to Pearson requirements for a definitive set of assessment regulations for Higher National programmes.

1.74   Overall, the review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The awarding bodies are primarily responsible for the design, development, and approval of the higher education programmes delivered at the College, and retain ultimate responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance. The university validated programmes delivered by the College can be designed and developed by the College in collaboration with the university partner. All of the validated programmes that the College delivers undergo formal approval processes that are owned by the universities.

2.2 The College is able to design, or construct, the Pearson Higher National awards it delivers from off-the-shelf modules. Pearson do not require the College's involvement in programme design, development and approval, although the College is able to tailor the delivery of its Higher National programmes through the selection of optional units. At present, the College does not opt to approve any specialist modular content for its Pearson qualifications.

2.3 The College has developed its own course approval process requiring the completion of an Approval of New Higher Education Courses Form, which receives final approval from the Chair of the QSC after consideration by the Curriculum Strategy Team. University validated courses then undertake course validation and approval activities with the associated university, with Pearson provision undertaking internal review at an extended meeting of the College's Curriculum Strategy Team, prior to final approval and sign off by the Vice Principal. The College does not routinely involve students in the approval of its awards, although consultation and consideration of student feedback can occur during design and development.

2.4 The process of programme design, development and approval meets the Expectation in theory. In reaching its final conclusions on the operation of the process, the team reviewed documentation provided by the College, including the recent approval of programmes, and met and questioned staff from the College and its partner universities.

2.5 College staff played an active role in the design, development and approval of the University of Lincoln FdSc Sports Therapy, FdSc Health and Fitness, and FdSc Sports Coaching, Education and Development programmes, and attended the validation events held at the University in 2013 and 2014 respectively. The College inherited the Complementary Medicine and Golf programmes, along with associated staff from the University of Lincoln, after an approval event in May 2012. While College staff participated in the revalidation of the College-only Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Computing programme, the qualification is a subset of the parent degree award that runs at the University of Lincoln, and so was primarily designed and developed by the University. Likewise, the BGU Diploma is a University-designed, developed and approved award.

2.6 The College relies upon its own processes to approve Pearson qualifications. The review team saw evidence of this process being used following a recent proposal to

introduce a Higher National Certificate in Travel and Tourism Management. Students were not involved in the College's approval process. Likewise, the involvement of College students in the approval of active University of Lincoln and BGU programmes was not evident.

2.7　　　The review team observed inconsistencies in progression arrangements from FdScs and Higher National programmes to the University of Lincoln, including the Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Computing, validated with the University of Lincoln and Pearson Higher National awards. The team also saw documentation that demonstrated recent changes in progression requirements for students hoping to join the University upon completion of an associated College programme. The approval form for the Higher National Certificate in Travel and Tourism Management also made claims for potential progression that may not be able to be met by the University. While progression arrangements could be set during approval processes, it was not evident that these arrangements were necessarily maintained during programme operation to the potential disadvantage of students. The team observed that the main duty of the College in these circumstances was to ensure that students or potential students were provided with timely and accurate information so that they could make well informed decisions about their chosen subject and route of study.

2.8　　　The Approval of New Higher Education Courses Form and process do not require students to be consulted or involved in the programme approval process. The absence of higher education student membership on the Curriculum Strategy Team and QSC means there is also a lack of student representation in the College's deliberative committee structure where new course proposals are discussed and approved. The College therefore does not have an established mechanism to formally or informally involve its students in programme approval. The review team therefore **recommends** that by September 2015 the College ensure student involvement in programme approval processes.

2.9　　　Notwithstanding the recommendation, the College has adequate processes for the design, development and approval of programmes that enable it to set and maintain academic standards, and assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation:　Met
Level of risk:　Low

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*

Findings

2.10   The College has an Admission Policy, which includes bespoke guidance for higher education applicants. The procedure for admitting students to College via UCAS or directly is also outlined in the staff and Admissions Policy handbooks. The admissions process is administered centrally by the Higher Education Admin Officer, who acts as a single point of contact to consistently apply the recruitment procedure.

2.11   All higher education applicants who wish to study full-time at the College are required to apply via UCAS. These applications are then received by the Higher Education Admin Officer prior to forwarding to the course teams for consideration. General information about the College and specific course details required by UCAS are maintained by the Higher Education Admin Officer, along with the higher education specific pages of the College website.

2.12   Applications for part-time study are made directly to the College and are received by the College registry prior to forwarding to the course teams for consideration. All applications are collated by the Higher Education Admin Officer, who ensures that applicants are provided with appropriate course information.

2.13   The Admissions Policy is thorough and details an appeals process should applicants not be content with the outcome of their application.

2.14   The selection and admission of students for the Diploma in Education and Training is undertaken by the College in consultation with BGU, and in accordance with the specific entrance requirements stipulated by the latter. This admissions process is set out in the University's Code of Practice on Admissions.

2.15   Both students who had applied via UCAS and directly to the College confirmed that the process was straightforward. They had been able to discuss the programme they were interested in studying with a tutor via email and phone, and in some cases had been invited to observe classes. Students had all been interviewed, and where they were returning to education they had been given the opportunity to look at case studies, written work and take reading comprehension tests. Overall, students felt well supported in the process.

2.16   All students receive induction at the start of their programme, which they felt prepared them in making the transition from a prospective students to a current student. Students confirmed that there are also appropriate inductions once they transition to the following academic year. Students who were interested in progressing to the University of Lincoln on completion of their College programme have the opportunity to visit the University and to be briefed on module choices.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.18   The Higher Education Strategy 2012-15 articulates the College's vision and key values, including the provision of great teachers, exciting courses, and the support and development of staff to achieve a high standard of delivery. While the institutional Teaching and Learning Strategy is not higher education specific, but covers the College's entire programme portfolio, the Higher Education Enhancement Plan provides a focus for effective teaching and learning in higher education provision, and the College has a distinct and well defined higher education approach to the monitoring of teaching quality, through the lesson observation process.

2.19   Staff appointed to higher education teaching must hold a relevant degree-level qualification; and must have, or obtain within a specified period following appointment, a teaching qualification equivalent to level 4. Staff also receive a bespoke higher education induction provided by experienced higher education teachers, who have been appointed by the College as Advanced Practitioners.

2.20   The observation of teaching, learning and assessment process, which the College regards as a key component of its quality assurance framework, aims to enhance students' learning experience through monitoring tutor performance, identifying staff development needs and facilitating the sharing of good practice. The Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Procedures, which apply to all the College's provision, incorporate lesson observations; the production of observation reports, development plans and Self-Assessment Reports; staff appraisal; and individual performance review.

2.21   Recognising the distinctive practices required for effective higher education teaching, the Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy provides for higher education sessions to be observed by a team with higher education experience on an annual or biennial basis, depending on the extent of individual teachers' higher education workload. Higher education teaching must be evaluated against external benchmarks, including the Higher Education Academy Professional Skills and Knowledge Framework, the relevant sections of the Quality Code, and the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework. The observation of teaching, learning and assessment higher education guidance document provides further detail, setting out the links between the benchmarks, and mapping these against general teaching, learning and assessment principles.

2.22   Programme teams are required to report, through Annual Programme Monitoring Reports and Self-Assessment Reports, on areas identified for the development and enhancement of student learning opportunities. Accompanying Quality Improvement Plans are designed to record actions taken in response or still ongoing. Annual monitoring processes provide for institutional oversight of learning and teaching quality through the QSC's scrutiny of the HEAMR, which draws on annual programme reporting. Student learning opportunities are also monitored, reviewed and evaluated through the University of Lincoln periodic academic review process.

2.23   The College's policies and procedures for maintaining, reviewing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities and teaching practices allow the Expectation to be met.

2.24   The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of College policies and procedures, annual monitoring reports, the Staff Handbook, meeting minutes, staff CVs, appraisal and teaching observation data, and schedules, and in meetings with staff and students.

2.25   Staff appointment processes are implemented effectively to ensure that higher education staff are suitably qualified. All newly appointed staff receive an higher education focused teaching, learning and assessment induction provided by an Advanced Practitioner.

2.26   The Staff Handbook sets out useful information on learning, teaching and assessment, including the use of the VLE, plagiarism-detection software and social media; student induction and support; and staff development and lesson observation.

2.27   Lesson observation, appraisal and individual performance review processes operate according to College requirements. Staff the review team met confirmed that these processes are fully implemented; that they are used to set individual targets for the enhancement of their practice; and that they inform wider staff development planning.

2.28   The Centre for Professional Development provides training days for all College teaching staff. These include external speakers and higher education-focused sessions delivered by the Advanced Practitioners. Staff are encouraged and supported in pursuing higher level degree study and these opportunities are taken up by higher education staff. Higher education staff also take advantage of university staff development and other external development opportunities. Higher education Course Committees monitor and discuss staff development activity undertaken by members of the team.

2.29   The monthly Higher Education Forum, which is open to all staff involved in higher education, is established as a means of cross-College discussion and communication. The forum is well attended, clearly valued by staff and used effectively as a vehicle for discussing developments in student learning opportunities and sharing good practice.

2.30   Programme teams report, through Annual Programme Monitoring Reports and Self-Assessment Reports, on areas identified for the development and enhancement of student learning opportunities. This analysis is informed by feedback from students, external examiners and employers. The relevant information is drawn together in the Quality Improvement Plans incorporated into the reports. Examples of improvements and enhancements recorded in recent annual reporting include the introduction of study skills weeks; enhancements in learning technologies; improved systems of student feedback; use of social media; and enhancements to student induction. Reports also evidence the identification and sharing of good practice in the provision of student learning opportunities.

2.31   College-level oversight of the quality of student learning opportunities is maintained by the QSC, which, through scrutiny of the HEAMR, assures itself that deliberate steps are taken to improve the quality of learning opportunities. The HEAMR outlines outcomes and associated action planning, drawing on programme annual reporting and informed by a range of information, including information from lesson observations and peer observations; completion data; National Student Survey student satisfaction data; external examiner comments; and qualitative reporting through the Higher Education Forum, Self-Assessment Reports and Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, and by external examiners. Areas identified for improvement are generally followed through from year to year, with reports on actions completed or still being progressed.

2.32   The review team found that the College articulates, systematically reviews and enhances the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practice. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.33   The College adopts a systematic, institutional approach to arrangements and resources to support students' development. Group Heads of Service for Library and Learning Resources, and Information Technology, and College Team Leaders for Guidance and Welfare, and Safeguarding, Assessment and Support, hold responsibility for their respective areas of service provision for all College students.

2.34   The Information and Learning Technology Strategy 2013-15 defines strategic priorities and targets, allocates significant financial resources, and details operational planning for the ongoing improvement of the information and learning technology infrastructure, led by the Information and Learning Technology Steering Committee. The College has invested in improved library facilities, provided in a new library at the Lincoln site, where all the College's higher education students are based. The Library's Learning Resources Unit undertakes annual analysis and ongoing action planning in response to National Student Survey and internal student survey outcomes.

2.35   Systems are in place to support students with learning difficulties or disabilities. Students declaring known learning difficulties or disabilities on application are invited to an interview with the Student Needs Assessment Team. Following enrolment, a support needs assessment report and support plan must be forwarded to the course team and copied to the Higher Education Programme Manager. The relevant Programme Manager is responsible for ensuring that teaching staff act on the information. Student Services are charged with supporting students with any Disability Support Allowance applications and signposting local educational support agencies.

2.36   Induction activities must be provided for new students at the earliest opportunity in their course, to ensure they are fully aware of course and College expectations and resources. The Student Handbook notes the generic cross-College information that is to be included in induction and includes a tick list of minimum activities, for signature by students upon completion.

2.37   To ensure that all students are made aware of the College's expectations and what they can expect from their experience, the College requires that the Higher Education Handbook be issued to each student during induction. The Handbook is designed to provide generic College guidance and must be populated with specific course information by the course team.

2.38   All students must be supported by a personal tutor, who is identified at induction and whose contact details are set out in the Student Handbook.

2.39   To complement College based teaching and learning, each course must provide a VLE site, allowing students access to course information, and the College sets required minimum levels of information for higher education provision.

2.40   The College's arrangements and resources designed to enable higher education students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, and its systems for associated monitoring and review, allow the Expectation to be met.

2.41 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including Staff and Student Handbooks, Student Services guidelines, action plans and minutes of meetings, and in demonstrations and meetings with staff and students at the review visit.

2.42 Students whom the review team met had attended induction when they joined the College. They confirmed that induction provided a helpful introduction to the College, through provision of information on their course and support services, a library induction and campus tour.

2.43 Students who declare learning difficulties or disabilities on application are referred to Student Services for assessment. Course teams are responsible for putting in place the support necessary to meet students' identified learning needs. The review team formed the view that the associated processes are working effectively.

2.44 Higher education programme handbooks set out clear and useful information for students, covering general College information, including Student Services; complaints and appeals; the library, IT and the VLE; how to access the Learning Advisers; a referencing guide and the use of plagiarism-detection software to support learning; and course guidelines. Students whom the review team met confirmed that they received hard copy handbooks at induction and that these are also available online. Students also confirmed that they receive clear and accessible information about the support services available to them.

2.45 Personal tutors provide pastoral support through timetabled tutorial sessions, open-door access during specified periods and general availability, as required. The online ProMonitor system is used by tutors to track students' academic progress and attendance records, and to record SMART targets, actions taken and notes of meetings with students. College-level ProMonitor audits are undertaken to monitor the scope and quality of staff input. System enhancements and corrective action are identified and reviewed.

2.46 Individual students' progress is monitored and discussed at Course Committees (as a confidential agenda item following student representatives' withdrawal from the meetings) and oversight is maintained by Course Coordinators, with reporting forwarded to Programme Managers and Directors of School, where necessary.

2.47 Students can access ProMonitor to view their assessment briefs, schedules, deadlines, grades and feedback, and to record reflection on their learning. While the review team found that ProMonitor is an effective tool for learning and student support, it was clear from student comments at the review visit that the use of the system by higher education students is by no means universal.

2.48 The VLE provides higher education students with a wide range of course and other information, including programme and module specifications, learning materials, external examiner reports, and annual module and programme monitoring reports. The Higher Education Programme Manager undertakes audits designed to monitor the quality of content and to ensure that the College's requirements for minimum levels of information for higher education provision are met. Any deficiencies are identified and followed up.

2.49 The College has responded to negative student feedback on the reliability of College IT systems through significant investment in extensive upgrades to its internal IT infrastructure, now substantially completed. The work led to inevitable temporary service interruptions, resulting in difficulties with email and VLE access for students. The College is continuing to monitor student feedback to identify any outstanding areas for improvement.

2.50   The library has provision for quiet study areas and a bespoke Higher Education Study Room. Library Learning Advisers with a higher education remit are available to help students locate appropriate resources. Learning Advisers receive module reading lists and work with Course Coordinators to ensure the timely provision of recommended texts. Students can also access a range of e-journal and periodical resources available from Joint Information Systems Committee collections. Higher education students enrolled on university programmes are eligible to register as users of the respective university libraries. Students indicate that the improvements in library resources, including the quiet study areas and Higher Education Study Room, contribute to the enhancement of their learning experience.

2.51   The Library Learning Resources Unit keeps library provision under continual review through analysis of National Student Survey outcomes, library focus groups and internal surveys specifically for higher education students. Areas for improvement are identified and progress on actions arising is systematically tracked and evaluated.

2.52   While noting problems with the College IT infrastructure, which have been addressed through the recently completed upgrades, students express general satisfaction with the resources and facilities.

2.53   Overall, the review team found that the College has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.54   There are a range of opportunities for students to provide feedback to the College, including module surveys, student representatives attending subject committees, a number of cross-College focus groups, student representation on the Higher Education Forum and Library Forum, as well as an open door policy for students to access tutors.

2.55   The College requires each student cohort to select a student representative to represent their views to the College Course Committees, which meet each term. There is a College funded post of Students' Union Vice President for Higher Education created as part of the Higher Education Strategy 2012-15. The Vice President is a member of the Higher Education Forum and Library Forum. Further plans to establish a higher education specific Students' Union have not yet been realised.

2.56   The review team examined minutes of committees in which students are represented, reviewed information for students, the use of student feedback in the annual monitoring process, and spoke to staff and students about student engagement in quality assurance.

2.57   Students commented that they had not received specific training for their role as student representatives on Course Committees, although tutors explained the role at the first meeting and provided them with support. The student submission gave a more mixed picture whereby some course representatives did not fully understand what their role entails. Senior College staff confirmed that while the College had anticipated that training for the role would be provided by the Students' Union, no training was currently in place, but steps were now being taken to secure support from the NUS. Students confirmed that through the Course Committees staff were responsive to their feedback, and gave numerous examples of where course staff had acted on it. Students also commented that tutors were responsive to their individual approaches and that tutors were keen to take forward issues raised.

2.58   While the College has been active in promoting the role of Vice President for Higher Education to students through course handbooks and other literature for students, the student submission reports that some students are unaware of whom the Vice President is, what the role entails, or that they could raise concerns and problems with him.

2.59   The College's library action plans offers an example of how responses from the student submission, alongside data from the National Student Survey, are used and actioned in improving student's conditions for learning.

2.60   There are currently no arrangements in place for the representation of higher education students on the senior committees of the College that relate to higher education, namely, the Curriculum Strategy Team and QSC, and no specific higher education representation on the Board of Corporation. A former further education student is now employed by the College in the role of College-wide Student President and sits on the Board of Corporation as representative of all students. The team heard about attempts to create a Higher Education Student Executive, with the aim of providing a direct link between higher education students and the Students' Union President. This group, Chaired by the Higher Education Programme Manager, had met with limited success and it was unclear at the time of the review visit how this initiative was being taken forward. It therefore remained unclear

to the review team how the collective voice of higher education students was heard at the level of the Board of Corporation. The team found that arrangements did not currently exist for the effective representation of the voice of higher education students at all levels of the College.

2.61   A further issue with regard to student involvement in quality assurance processes was noted under Expectation B1, which led the review team to make a recommendation. The team found that the College does not have an established system to involve students in programme approval and furthermore, as students are not represented on the Curriculum Strategy Team and QSC, they are also not part of the formal committee stages of the approval process.

2.62   Overall, the team found that there were weaknesses in the operation of the student engagement systems and gaps in terms of the involvement of students as partners in the quality assurance and enhancement of educational experience. As a consequence, the review team **recommends** that by September 2015 the College provide opportunities for student representation on all higher education deliberative structures and ensure that representatives are suitably prepared for their roles. The review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not 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

2.63   The College adheres to the assessment and recognition of prior learning regulations and processes of its partner awarding bodies for its university validated programmes. The College assesses students on Pearson programmes through a combination of Pearson and College published documents. For these programmes, the College also follows its own published College-wide Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

2.64   Programme team members attend university convened Assessment Boards. In accordance with its Examination Board Terms of Reference, the College conducts its own Assessment Boards for Pearson qualifications, Chaired by a senior member of College staff in the presence of programme staff and external examiners.

2.65   The annual monitoring process is used as the primary vehicle for enhancement of the assessment process.

2.66   The processes established by the College to ensure valid and reliable processes of assessment and the recognition of prior learning meet the Expectation in theory. In reaching its final conclusions, the review team reviewed documentation provided by the College and available from the awarding bodies. The team also referred to information obtained from meeting and questioning staff from the College and its partner universities, and students.

2.67   The College operates an internal quality assurance process and ensures that all assessment items are verified internally. The outcomes of this internal quality assurance process are then reviewed annually by external examiners, and the College conducts an internal audit and evaluation of the process. External examiners are also required to assess the validity and reliability of assessment strategies and verify assessments prior to issuing.

2.68   As part of the evidence that contributes to annual monitoring, tutors produce end-of-module reports for University of Lincoln programmes that critically reflect upon student performance and student feedback. These forms use qualitative and quantitative data to reflect on student performance, and the validity and effectiveness of the assessment methods employed. Students also attend the Higher Education Forum and Course Committees which, along with the annual monitoring system as a whole, provide opportunities for the College to reflect upon and enhance assessment. A recent innovation has been use of the online learner monitoring support software (ProMonitor) to enable students to reflect on assessment feedback and placements.

2.69   The review team was informed that Pearson external examiners had not advised the College to produce a specific set of regulations for Pearson awards. The team was further informed that reference to three documents enabled all applicable assessment regulations to be determined. These documents comprised of Pearson's BTEC guide to assessment levels 4 to 7, to the student appeals and complaints procedure, and the relevant programme specification. The team examined these documents and found that the quality and completeness of information contained across the document set and within individual programme specifications was not consistent. In addition, the documentation did not make

clear how a student could fail an award with the requirement to exit with credit or an alternative award. As the College does not publish a definitive set of assessment regulations for its Pearson programmes, staff and students are required to reference a number of documents in order to try and determine certain specific details regarding the operation of assessment. This lack of College assessment regulations is contrary to the requirements of Pearson, however, during the review, the College acknowledged the need for action and produced proposed draft BTEC assessment regulations. Under Expectation 2.1 the review team affirms the action the College is taking to develop a definitive set of assessment regulations for Pearson programmes.

2.70   The College's Assessment Boards for Pearson Higher National programmes are attended by staff and external examiners, and are accurately and appropriately minuted. Staff attend university convened boards, as required.

2.71   For the Diploma in Education and Training, applications for accreditation of prior learning are considered by the Course Leader under the terms of the awarding body's Code of Practice for the Accreditation of Prior Learning. The Course Leader then makes a recommendation to the awarding body's accreditation of prior learning panel via the Link Tutor, and that panel determines whether the credit will be awarded. Likewise, the University of Lincoln process operates via the Link Tutor and in accordance with the awarding body's regulations. For Pearson programmes, the College has an established and documented procedure that it follows prior to the admission of a student.

2.72   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, although the absence of a definitive set of Pearson programme assessment regulations leads the team to conclude that the associated level of risk is moderate, due to the shortcomings in the rigour to which Pearson procedures are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.73   In accordance with the contractual arrangements, external examiners are appointed by the respective awarding bodies to each of the higher education programmes delivered by the College.

2.74   Currently, no external examiner reports are available for the BGU programme, as this programme is in its first year.

2.75   Reporting templates for the University of Lincoln and Pearson reflect the expectations of the external examiner role, requiring confirmation, in annual reports, that threshold standards are maintained and that assessment processes measure achievement against the intended learning outcomes; and comment on good practice and enhancement. External examiners are also asked to confirm that they are provided with sufficient information and evidence to undertake their role effectively; and whether they have received responses to issues raised in previous reports.

2.76   Where modules are delivered both by the College and the University of Lincoln, external examiners are required to report separately on the College provision and its comparability with the University's on-campus provision.

2.77   For some programmes, course teams must respond directly to external examiners following the annual reporting cycle. With respect to other programmes, which comprise modules incorporated into different programmes delivered at the University of Lincoln, course teams are required to respond to the University via the Annual Programme Monitoring Report, in order for collated responses to be sent to the respective external examiners. Higher National course teams must consider external examiners' feedback at the end of year Examination Boards, again for their Self-Assessment Report and then throughout the academic year during course team meetings. Unless specific actions are identified by the external examiner, there is no requirement for a direct response to the report.

2.78   Annual programme report templates require analysis of external examiner feedback, together with action planning and confirmation of actions taken in response.

2.79   The College HEAMR template requires comment on external examiners' verification of academic standards, and provides for analysis of external examiner feedback on the quality of student learning opportunities and enhancement. The requirement for the HEAMR to be presented to the QSC is aimed to provide institutional oversight of external examiner reports.

2.80   The College process for responding to external examiners' reports has been further developed to include additional elements to be implemented this year, including the use of a template for responding to external examiners and a separate external examiner summary report prepared by the Higher Education Programme Manager for presentation to the QSC. The process is clearly and comprehensively documented.

2.81   The design of the College's processes for external examining allows the Expectation to be met.

2.82   The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of contractual documentation, external examiner and annual reporting templates, external examiner reports and responses to external examiners, and in meetings with staff and students.

2.83   Higher education Course Committees monitor and discuss actions taken and to be taken on external examiner feedback. As the College's processes require, course teams respond directly to external examiners or to the respective awarding body through annual programme reporting. Responses are generally well considered, demonstrating thorough analysis of and reflection on external examiner feedback. Resulting action planning and reporting on previous year's actions are generally clear and focused. Higher National course teams consider external examiners' feedback and any actions required at the end of year Examination Boards.

2.84   External examiners generally confirm that they have received appropriate responses to issues raised in previous reports.

2.85   HEAMRs provide assurance to the QSC that all higher education courses are subject to the scrutiny of external examiners, who confirm that academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities are being maintained. Examples of good practice identified by external examiners are also reported.

2.86   The new elements of the College's process for responding to external examiners' reports, developed for implementation this year, are still to be tested.

2.87   External examiner reports are made available to all students via the central higher education VLE page.

2.88   Overall, the review team found that the College makes scrupulous use of external examiners. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.89   The awarding bodies are responsible for the design, formal approval, and review of the higher education programmes delivered at the College. The College does not undertake periodic reviews of its higher education provision but it does undertake annual monitoring.

2.90   Annual monitoring processes at the College require each course to reflect upon the academic year via Self-Assessment Reports for Pearson awards and Annual Programme Monitoring Reports for the programmes validated by the College's partner universities. The reports provide course performance data, student feedback, employer feedback, staff reflections, external examiner reports and the responses to those reports. The Annual Programme Monitoring Reports include an associated action plan, and the Self-Assessment Reports are accompanied by Quality Improvement Plans. The monitoring reports are produced by Course Leaders, signed off at School-level. These reports, and any responses from the partner universities to the Link Tutors Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, are collated by the Higher Education Programme Manager and combined into the College's HEAMR. This report and its associated College-level Quality Improvement Plan are submitted to the QSC for consideration and approval. Progress against action plans is then overseen by the QSC and monitored by Course Committees.

2.91   College staff attend annual Assessment Boards convened by the awarding bodies or the College, in the case the Pearson qualifications, in the presence of external examiners and Chaired by awarding body or senior College staff. At the time of the review, an Assessment Board had yet to sit for the Diploma in Education and Training validated by BGU.

2.92   The PSRBs associated with the Herbal Medicine, Acupuncture and Sports Therapy programmes conduct annual paper based reviews of their accredited programmes. Academic standards and quality are considered during these reviews, alongside a range of other set criteria, and programme teams consider these reports during annual monitoring.

2.93   The processes outlined for the monitoring and review of programmes meet the Expectation in theory. The review team reviewed documentation provided by the College in reaching its final conclusions, and was able to meet with and question staff of the College and partner universities, and students.

2.94   Appropriate evidence of annual monitoring was available for all programmes run by the College. Self-Assessment Report and Annual Programme Monitoring Report templates are made available for the production of reports, and exemplar reports are available to assist in their production. The production of these reports by Schools was timely and included appropriate external input from both of the university partners and the National Student Survey, and considered module reports for University of Lincoln programmes, and the reports from PRSBs and external examiners. The College Link Tutors provide the University Link Tutors with Annual Programme Monitoring Reports for the validated courses, which enable them to contribute to the annual monitoring processes of the universities. The College also receive feedback from the universities that, along with the Self-Assessment Reports and Annual Programme Monitoring Reports, is used by the Higher Education Programme Manager to inform production of the HEAMR for the QSC.

2.95   Through inspection of reports and action plans, responses to external examiners, and QSC and Course Committee minutes, and from talking to College staff, the review team was able to determine that the annual monitoring process was active in monitoring and maintaining academic standards, and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. As such, adequate deliberative processes were in place to ensure that reports were completed in a timely manner and the action plans generated were considered at Course Committees and discussed by the QSC.

2.96   The College relies upon the universities' quality assurance processes to review the validated provision and address any issues regarding the maintenance of academic standards and quality assurance. There was adequate evidence of College staff involvement in these reviews. The College did not review its Pearson Higher National qualifications once approved and it did not have a formal process by which to terminate an award.

2.97   There was also evidence that the College considered the views of industry and relevant employers in the design of its programmes, particularly those in the area of Complementary Medicine and Sports. College staff also had a good working relationship with university Link Tutors and were responsive to and knowledgeable of university quality assurance requirements, and the expectations of Pearson. The recent production of a Staff Higher Education Handbook also proved helpful in this respect.

2.98   Feedback from students formed an active part of annual monitoring. No involvement of students in programme review was possible, as the College did not periodically review its Pearson programme provision, nor did it publish a process for programme termination. This was compounded by the College not having a method of routinely involving students in the approval or re-approval of programmes validated by its awarding bodies.

2.99   The review team found that the College implemented adequate processes for the monitoring and review of programmes that enabled academic standards to be set and maintained above the threshold standard, while assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.100   Both university partners require the College to operate procedures for addressing complaints by students that are comparable to their own procedures.

2.101   The College operates a Customer Complaints and Grievance Procedure for general complaints about the student experience, and a Student Assessment and Appeals Policy and Procedure for students wishing to appeal an academic decision. Students initially follow the College's procedures for complaints and appeals with recourse to follow the complaint and appeals procedures of their appropriate validated partner when the College's procedures are exhausted. The College also has a documented admissions appeals procedure.

2.102   The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures by examining relevant documents, including College policies, the Student Handbook, the Staff Handbook, committee minutes and online resources, and by talking to students and staff about complaints and appeals.

2.103   The College's complaints and appeals procedures are available on the College website, the Student Handbook, the Higher Education Staff Handbook and the VLE. The complaints and appeals procedures clearly detail the process with step-by-step information, leading to the possibility of pursuing an unsatisfactory appeal or complaint with the relevant validating partners.

2.104   Handbooks advise students on an informal first step in both appeals and complaints, advising students who feel aggrieved to contact their tutor in order to allow the early resolution; following this, there is the potential for formal avenues to be pursued. Should a complaint or appeal not reach an outcome that is satisfactory to the student, and the College procedure has been exhausted, the student does have the right to continue their complaint with the awarding organisation or validating university.

2.105   In review meetings, both staff and students showed awareness of the appeals and complaints procedures, understanding where appropriate information would be found and where they would go to for support in pursuing their appeals and complaints.

2.106   An annual report of complaints is considered by the QSC, where trends are discussed and the overall effectiveness of the procedure is evaluated and appropriate actions identified.

2.107   Overall, the review team found that students and staff understand the College's processes for making appeals and complaints, and were aware of recourse to the awarding bodies. Information on the procedures was accessible to students and staff. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.108   The College has arrangements with a range of employers for delivering learning opportunities for higher education students through the provision of work-based placements. These may comprise a series of short placements spread over several weeks or more extensive placements of several weeks' duration.

2.109   The College has a comprehensive and detailed College Work Experience Policy. This sets out the College work experience placement process and requirements, together with a comprehensive range of associated forms and templates.

2.110   The Work Experience Policy requires course teams to confirm that: they have followed the College work experience placement process; the Service Level Agreement (together with the Induction Guidance for Employers) has been sent out, signed and returned; each work placement has clear aims and objectives; up-front roles and responsibilities between employer/College/student have been agreed upon; employer liability insurance is in place; the student is 'work ready'; the College staff contact during the placement is identified; the student understands their responsibility to evaluate their own performance at the end of the placement; and the work experience has been properly recorded on the College's client management system.

2.111   College staff are required to ensure that health, safety and workplace assessments are carried out and that work placements have clear aims and objectives that are relevant to individual students' programmes of study, including students with additional needs.

2.112   The College's Service Level Agreement details: College, employer and student responsibilities, commitments and roles with respect to planning the placement; student induction; support and delivery; opportunities for practising work-related skills; continuing evaluation and review; health and safety; equal opportunities; and safeguarding.

2.113   The Induction Guidance for Employers sets out common points for student induction, including: workplace hazards and emergency procedures; learner-specific risk-assessment; confidentiality; and safeguarding.

2.114   The College's policies and procedures relating to arrangements with employers for delivering learning opportunities for higher education students through the provision of work-based placements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.115   The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of placement assessment documentation and records of student progress on placement, and in meetings with staff, students and employers.

2.116   Employers who provide placements for higher education students have close contact with College programme-level staff. They consider that placement arrangements are managed by the College in a professional manner. Employers confirm that the College provides them with clear information on their role and on the College's expectations of students on placement. Placements are organised well in advance of their start date;

employers receive a work placement pack, which includes useful guidance information, together with various forms to be completed, including risk assessment templates; and College staff ensure that all the relevant forms are completed and returned.

2.117   The details of employers providing placements are recorded on the College's client management system, and records are also kept locally in Schools.

2.118   Students are set clear targets and objectives for the placement, and value the opportunities provided for ongoing reflection on their experience through learning journals, including the Work Related Experience Learning Journal, accessible on the VLE. While employers do not formally assess students on placement, they provide feedback to the College on the work undertaken by students and on their performance and progress. Student progress on placement is monitored and recorded at School-level.

2.119   Employers take up the opportunities available to feedback to the College on the placement experience, and confirm that the College responds very positively to their comments and suggestions.

2.120   Overall, the review team found that the College's arrangements with employers for delivering learning opportunities for higher education students through the provision of work-based placements are implemented securely and managed effectively. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.121   The College offers no postgraduate provision, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.123   Nine of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area have been met with two recommendations arising in total. Where the Expectations are met, the risks are considered to be low apart from Expectation B6, which is considered moderate. For the Expectation which is not met, the risks are considered to be moderate. There are a total of two recommendations reflecting weaknesses and moderate gaps in the deliberate steps taken to engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience, including the student involvement in the programme approval process. The review team also affirmed the action being taken by the College to develop a definitive set of assessment regulations for Pearson programmes, which addresses a shortcoming in the rigour with which the College has applied Pearson procedures.

2.124   While no good practice was identified for this judgement area, the review team notes a number of positive factors contributing to the judgement, including: the opportunity for prospective students to shadow classes; the Higher Education Forum as a vehicle for discussing developments in student learning opportunities and sharing good practice; the contribution of the annual monitoring process in identifying areas for development and enhancement; the opportunity for some students to use learner monitoring software to reflect on their learning; and the policies, procedures and arrangements for managing work-based placements.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   The College's validating partners are responsible for the validity of public information regarding validated programmes. Responsibility lies with Link Tutors for both validating universities to report on the accuracy and completeness of public information and information given to students about their respective programmes. For the University of Lincoln Link Tutors this forms part of their annual report, while the BGU Link Tutor reports to the Joint Board of Studies. These arrangements are set out in the respective partnership agreements.

3.2   As set out in the Staff Handbook, the accuracy and currency of internal course information is managed by the Course Coordinator. Responsibility for information supplied to students, for instance, module specifications and handbooks, and assignment briefs, lies with each member of the course delivery team. Course information in module handbooks is taken directly from the programme specification to minimise inaccuracies occurring.

3.3   The College provides information for prospective students through generic College and course information on its website and in a number of course guides published in hardcopy and online.

3.4   Material published on the College and UCAS websites comprising generic information about higher education at the College, financial information, student support and accommodation details, as well as course pages and the application process, is the responsibility of the Higher Education Admin Officer. There is input from course teams, Link Tutors and the Higher Education Programme Manager, as appropriate. Formal approval is the collective responsibility of course teams and the Higher Education Programme Manager. For new programmes, the course information originates from the new course form completed by the Course Coordinator, with the marketing materials approved by the Director of School and the Higher Education Programme Manager.

3.5   External marketing information for the prospectuses, higher education course guides and individual course information sheets are created by course teams through completion of a template, which is then forwarded to the College's marketing unit. Course marketing information is based on material of the awarding body, available in the programme specification. Decisions on the portfolio of programmes on offer for the year, including decisions on programmes to be added (once academic approval is completed), suspended and terminated, are made by the Director of School, in consultation with the Vice Principal Curriculum, Quality and Planning (a post no longer in existence), now the Higher Education Programme Manager. The review team found that the procedures for the approval of information for publication allows the Expectation to be met in theory.

3.6   The review team tested whether information about learning opportunities was fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy by speaking to teaching and support staff, managers and students, and by looking at documentation in printed format, on the website and VLE.

3.7   The students that the team met indicated that pre-entry information is helpful. At induction, all higher education students are provided with an Higher Education Handbook in hard copy, which provides generic guidance about the College as well as course specific information. The Handbook, along with module information, assignment briefs and other course specific resources, is available on the VLE, which students found useful and up to date. Students were clear about assignment information and grading criteria.

3.8   The College provides a full set of programme information to students on the VLE system, including links to College and university policies and procedures, quality assurance related documentation and external examiner reports. The College has guidance on the minimum information requirements, aimed at Course Coordinators, and course pages are regularly audited to ensure consistency of information and good practice. Students were satisfied by the information available to them on the VLE, particularly the centralised aspects of the VLE.

3.9   Programme specifications are held centrally by the awarding universities and it is the responsibility of the Course Coordinator to ensure that the most up-to-date version is available to students. Students were aware of programmes specifications and how to access them through their Higher Education Handbook and the VLE. In a small number of cases, however, the review team found out-of-date programme specifications available to students through the VLE, which would appear to be an oversight.

3.10   As already noted, the College provides information for prospective students through course information on its website and in a number of course guides published in hard copy and online. The review team explored with College staff the operation of College processes for ensuring the accuracy of this information.

3.11   As noted above, responsibility for decisions about the inclusion of programmes as part of the College's published higher education portfolio in course guides resides with the Director of School and the Higher Education Programme Manager. The review team found that in one case a programme still undergoing the approval process had been included in a course guide without any 'subject to approval' qualification. The College was of the view that because of the long timescales involved in the publication of course guide material, it was likely that programmes would be subsequently approved in time for the intake of students.

3.12   However, there is clearly no guarantee that a programme will ultimately be approved. Indeed, in the case of the particular programme noted in paragraph 3.11, which had been advertised prior to approval, approval had not ultimately been granted. The College had addressed the issue of the accuracy of the relevant published information by inserting a paper addendum slip into the printed course guide indicting that the programme was not available. However, there remains a serious risk of prospective students receiving misleading information about the availability of advertised programmes.

3.13   In addition to the issue concerning the accuracy of course guide information about programmes still undergoing approval, the review team found a number of other inaccuracies and inconsistencies in published information, including: un-dated course guides; the inclusion of addendum sheets in printed material where courses were no longer available but without the provision of corresponding corrective information in website material; inconsistencies in the title of programmes; labelling Bachelor's programmes at both levels 5 and 6; not providing information on the awarding body or only the logo of the awarding body; the inclusion of programmes that were not recruiting for that year and which were not anticipated to recruit in future years; and inconsistencies in the use of terminology across and within publications with regard to progression arrangements.

3.14   The College accepted that information about the awarding bodies in the prospectus material has not always been clear and was unable to confirm that marketing material was sent to their university partners for sign off.

3.15   The review team concludes that the wide range of errors and inconsistencies in the College's information about its programmes for prospective students means that the Expectation is not met. There are significant gaps in the procedures and management accountability to ensure that prospectus information is fit for purpose and trustworthy. The review team **recommends** that by July 2015 the College review and implement procedures to ensure that all information, including existing publicity material, is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The team considers the level of risk to be serious because the information for prospective student is in the public domain, the College was unaware of the issues before the review, and processes for ensuring published information is accessible, fit for purpose and trustworthy are not in place.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Serious

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

3.16   In reaching its judgment the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.17   Expectation C is not met and the level of risk is serious. The review team recommended that the College reviews and implements procedures to ensure that all information, including existing publicity material, is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.18   The review team concludes that the wide range of errors and inconsistencies in the College's information about its programmes for prospective students is serious, as there are significant gaps in the procedures and management accountability to ensure effective oversight of the accuracy of course guide information produced by the College. This impacts on the information about the availability of programmes, and the accuracy and consistency of published information. The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **does not meet** 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 Since its previous QAA review in October 2010, the College has worked to further enhance student learning opportunities. In November 2010, plagiarism-detection software was introduced to enable e-submission and to deter plagiarism. To support this initiative, staff were trained during Higher Education Forum meetings, and plagiarism-detection software is now widely used by the College for assessment submission. The Higher Education Programme Manager also delivers a standard Harvard referencing session to all new first year higher education groups, and the College has invested in reference management software to help students manage their referencing and electronic research resources.

4.2 The College's Higher Education Enhancement Plan 2014-15 is overseen by the Higher Education Forum and the QSC. The Plan draws together strategic objectives embedded in other College plans and reflections from annual monitoring to provide a succinct method of ensuring that the enhancement of learning opportunities remains an active consideration within the College's deliberative committee structure. However, not all of the actions relate directly to what might be considered as enhancement within the sector, as some are more focused towards practical improvements in the student learning experience. For example, following the increase in full-time student numbers resulting from the Core Margin exercise of 2012, the College recognised the need to provide a distinct higher education study environment. The provision of an Higher Education Study Room was integrated into the enhancement action plan, and subsequently provided and welcomed by students.

4.3 To further promote collective student engagement and representation, in 2013, a higher education student was appointed to the College Students' Union executive team as the Vice President for Higher Education. A second role was added in 2014 to provide enhanced representation for full-time and part-time students. This has been a positive step for the College in its journey towards ensuring greater participation of students in the deliberative and quality based processes of the College.

4.4 To further increase the higher education student culture and to enhance engagement with central information and quality assurance, a generic higher education VLE site was created in 2013. This provided a platform for directly sharing the HEAMR, external examiner reports, generic information and Students' Union activities, and offers a mechanism for immediate student feedback. While the College reported that there was low initial site use, 2014 has seen a significant increase in the number of students using the site, and when questioned by the review team, students were aware of the information provided by it and welcomed its introduction.

4.5 A bespoke Staff Handbook was designed and implemented in 2014. Intended as a single point of reference for higher education delivery staff and managers, the Handbook clarifies many of the College's expectations with respect to the student learning experience. The Handbook is of particular use for College staff new to higher education and documents the contrasts between higher and further education practices, providing active links to relevant guidance and regulation, and differentiating between Pearson expectations and those of the validating universities.

4.6   The College was also using an online learner monitoring support tool to archive all student feedback that was now provided, where possible, in electronic format. This enabled online student reflection of assessment feedback, and was being trialled in certain areas with the intention of rolling the initiative out across further modules and programmes in the near future.

4.7   The annual programme monitoring process, including the Self-Assessment Report for Pearson programmes, are well embedded, and use external data and student feedback effectively, enabling programme teams to identify potential enhancement opportunities. The College was also alert to providing a full set of programme information to students on the VLE system, including quality assurance related documentation and external examiner reports. The VLE is also regularly audited to ensure consistency of information across programmes and to improve the validity of the content.

4.8   The review team found that the College makes systematic efforts to identify opportunities for enhancement. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.10   The Expectation about enhancement is met and risk is considered low in this area. The review team found that there are appropriate quality assurance arrangements in place to identify opportunities for enhancement and deliberate steps are being taken at College-level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The team made two recommendations under the quality of learning opportunities concerning weaknesses and gaps in the use of the student voice, which, when addressed, should further strengthen the College's approach to enhancement.

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

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   College staff involved in higher education provision through teaching, support and management affirm the College's commitment to developing and enhancing students' professional, vocational and employability skills. Students have a range of opportunities for work-based or work-related learning, and the development of employability skills, both within and outside the formal curriculum.

5.2   Some programmes require students to complete work placements, which may comprise a series of short placements spread over several weeks or more extensive placements of several weeks' duration. Modules incorporating work experience may be supplemented within the same programme by modules designed to develop students' employability skills. The College facilitates students' professional clinical practice where this is required by accrediting bodies.

5.3   Where work experience is not integrated into the formal curriculum, there are opportunities for students to undertake volunteering activity in the workplace and to gain credit by completing employability-based modules.

5.4   Programmes incorporating work-related learning within the formal curriculum have appropriate associated learning outcomes, typically addressing: professional, clinical and practical skills; self-appraisal and reflective practice; the ability to work within teams, under pressure and to deadlines; and skills to promote career development. The College's Careers Service provides information on graduate careers and offers assistance with employability-focused workshops organised by programme teams.

5.5   The assessment of work-related learning supports students' professional development, comprising a range of activity, including: portfolios; collaborative projects involving workplace research activity; careers research; completion of mock job applications and interviews; reflective logs; and professional development files.

5.6   Some students, particularly those undertaking sports courses, have the opportunity to gain additional vocational qualifications, such as Personal Trainer, Gym Instructor and Sports Massage qualifications.

5.7   Course teams help promote students' opportunities for work experience by maintaining strong links with employers.

5.8   Student feedback regarding work-related learning and employability is gathered via module evaluation, student representatives and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education surveys. The most recent Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey shows that over 75 per cent of graduates felt they had been prepared for employment 'well' or 'very well', with scores above 90 per cent for Engineering and Sport.

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 29-32 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** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

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

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