Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of London Bridge Business Academy Ltd

October 2015

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at London Bridge Business Academy Ltd. The review took place from 6 to 8 October 2015. It was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Mark Atlay
- Dr Nick Dickson
- Mr Dan Morgan
- Mr Mike Ridout.

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

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of threshold 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.

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are followed by numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

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

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about London Bridge Business Academy Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at London Bridge Business Academy Ltd.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its awarding organisation **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.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to London Bridge Business Academy Ltd.

By April 2017:

- ensure that there is a clearly articulated and formalised plan to enable students to complete their programme of study by the expected end date of their course (Expectation B4)
- clarify and consistently implement the processes used to communicate with each student as to his/her status on the course (Expectation B4)
- schedule the Quality Committee meetings to maximise student attendance (Expectation B5)
- ensure the consistent use of terminology in exam boards' decisions in line with the BTEC centre guidance (Expectation B6).

By September 2017:

- refine and embed further the role of the key Quality Committee and exam boards to ensure that a robust framework underpins the Academy's quality assurance system (Expectations A2.1, B6 and B8)
- rationalise and clarify to students and staff the processes relating to assignment extensions and late submission of work (Expectation B6)
- develop a strategy to ensure the sustainability of the performance review process (Expectation B8 and Enhancement).

Theme: Student Employability

London Bridge Business Academy Ltd uses its English development sessions to develop students' employability and to work on skills such as CV writing. The Academy encourages students to gain relevant work experience, particularly during the vacation periods. There is a process to encourage students to reflect on their work experience, and the small scale of the organisation means that they can also access support from staff members in securing employment.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

About London Bridge Business Academy Ltd

London Bridge Business Academy Ltd (the Academy) was established in 2002 as a small private college with the intention of delivering quality education to national and international students aiming to develop their careers in business. The Academy was originally located in London Bridge but moved to Farringdon in 2011. The Academy's mission statement is 'Education has no boundaries'.

The Academy initially offered the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) Level 6 Diploma, and later added the Association of Business Executives (ABE) Level 5, 6 and 7 Postgraduate Diploma, and the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH) Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma programmes. However, at the time of the previous QAA Adapted Review for Specific Course Designation in May 2014, the Academy was only delivering the BTEC Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/D) in Business and this Pearson Education award continued to be the only programme being delivered at the time of this review. The Academy is intending to again recruit to CTH programmes from February 2017.

The Academy enrolled 54 students on the full-time HND Business programme in the 2013-14 academic year, with intakes in August/September and October 2013. In September 2015, 23 of these students were recorded as discontinued and 31 as continuing with the course. The Academy has cited difficulties linked to funding as an explanation of the performance of the 2013 cohorts and was aiming to support the remaining students from the August/September intake to complete in 2016 (see Expectation B4). In the 2014-15 academic year, the Academy enrolled 80 students onto the programme, with intakes in October 2014, January 2015 and February 2015. In September 2015 two of these students were recorded as discontinued. The Academy recorded 109 full-time students as continuing the HND Business programme in September 2015 and 110 in September 2016.

The Academy has two full-time staff members in the roles of Director of Studies and Head of Administration. In addition, there is another director, in a 0.75 post, with responsibility for accounts and fees, and two further administrative staff members. There are five lecturing staff who include the Director of Studies and the Head of Administration, and three part-time teaching staff. A further two lecturing staff members are listed but not actively involved with the current programme.

As noted, the Academy had its most recent QAA review in May 2014 under Review for Specific Course Designation (RSCD). The Academy has not had any major changes since this review but has continued to develop its HND Business provision.

The Academy cites a significant reduction in overseas student numbers in the last few years as a challenge and attributes this to regulations that do not allow students on Tier 4 student visas at independent colleges to work part-time during their period of study or during the holiday. The Academy articulates its approach to ethical recruitment and has countered the challenge by diversifying into the European Union market for its HND Business programme.

During the Academy's successful RSCD in May 2014, the review team identified advisable recommendations in relation to the process of updating information, the enhancement of the English language test and the timely marking of summative assignments. Other advisable recommendations related to the review of the reassessment policy and the need to apply grade criteria consistently on assignment briefs. The Academy has made progress in these areas by, for example, devising and implementing a new English language test. The Academy has also devised an assessment policy, provided guidance in handbooks and determined a maximum turnaround time for the marking of summative assessments. A standardised approach has been adopted to module handbooks and version control, and monitoring has been introduced for documentation.

The Academy also received desirable recommendations in relation to the need for consistency in assessment handbooks, to embed the Quality Code further, to extend the involvement of student representatives and to ensure the maintenance of version control on documentation. The Academy has taken steps to involve students more fully in quality assurance processes and has gathered more feedback from student representatives. The Academy is using version control on its documents and has completed further mapping to the Quality Code.

Explanation of the findings about London Bridge Business Academy Ltd

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

Explanation of the findings about London Bridge Business Academy Ltd

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The Academy currently delivers a Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business aligned with the Qualifications and Credit Framework. The Academy is not directly responsible for placing qualifications within the relevant framework, as the awarding organisation, Pearson, provides the regulatory frameworks for these Higher National awards. The regulatory frameworks for academic standards of the Academy's awarding organisation enable it to meet Expectation A1.

1.2   The review team tested this Expectation and the Academy's engagement with the awarding organisation's requirements through examining the Centre Approval document, handbooks, the Annual Monitoring Report and reports from external examiners. The team also held meetings with staff members from the Academy.

1.3   The Academy uses the standard Pearson specification and associated quality guidance for the HND Business programme and this is reflected in the content of the lecturer handbook. There is evidence of a proactive approach to working with the awarding organisation, with initial and ongoing discussions supported by staff development sessions. The external examiner reports supplied by Pearson show that the Academy is discharging its responsibilities in accordance with the awarding organisation's requirements. The May 2015 external examiner's report acknowledges the extensive training provided for staff members to ensure that academic standards are upheld.

1.4   The review team considers the threshold academic standards of awards at the Academy to be secured overall, as the Academy is delivering a programme and modules approved by its awarding organisation, in accordance with its own standards, which align with national frameworks and standards. The review team concludes therefore that Expectation A1 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

1.5   As the awarding organisation, Pearson has ultimate responsibility for the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of the programmes offered by the Academy. The award of academic credit and qualifications is made in accordance with the overarching Pearson regulations and academic framework. The BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment (Level 4 to 7) outlines the delegated requirements for the Academy in relation to operational frameworks and policies.

1.6   The Academy has a number of policies and procedures governing the award of credit. The Academy does not have an official governing group; the Director of Studies has strategic responsibility for the Academy. There is a Quality Committee, chaired by the Director of Studies, which deals with academic and quality issues. This Quality Committee has ultimate responsibility for academic issues. There is also a Learning and Teaching Strategy that sets out the general approach to assessment. The processes relating to the award of academic credit and qualifications enable Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.7   In order to test this Expectation and the effectiveness of the Academy's processes, the review team referred to the documentation of the awarding organisation and scrutinised a range of Academy information, including module specifications, student and staff handbooks, and external examiner reports. The team also held meetings with staff members and students.

1.8   The Academy's 2015 committee structure shows the Quality Committee being formed of lecturing and administration staff members and reporting to the Director of Studies, who has ultimate responsibility for quality assurance, strategy and curriculum planning. The Academy has developed its committee structure over recent years and introduced a formal committee in 2014, with regular meetings being held to date.

1.9   There are some ambiguities in the terminology used to describe the committee structure within the Academy. Different titles are evident for the Quality Committee and there is a lack of clarity in its operation alongside the tutor training meetings. The Academy explained that the title had been changed from the 'Programme Committee' to the 'Quality Committee' as initially the committee was to represent all the planned courses, but would later only oversee the one BTEC course. There are two documents that relate to the role of the Quality Committee. One document outlines the rules and purpose of the committee, which include the requirements for the Committee to make recommendations but for decision making to be kept by the Director of Studies at all times. The second document provides a statement of primary responsibilities for the committee, which includes an approval function. The Academy explained the differing roles outlined in these two documents by highlighting that the rules and purposes document was the most reflective of day-to-day operations; the Academy also noted the need for the Quality Committee to give approval, although the Director of Studies makes the ultimate decisions. There are minutes taken for the Quality Committee meetings and these provide a record of the items discussed. However, these minutes do not provide details of the discussion that took place and as a consequence this is not available for future reference. For meetings such as the exam board, there is a lack of referencing to other documentation, such as student achievement records or progression lists and a lack of allocated timescales for actions. The lack of detail within the meeting minutes means that it is difficult to be assured that actions are being effectively monitored through the Quality Committee and exam board meetings. The Academy

explained that if issues discussed at one meeting remained a concern, they would be raised at the next, but this would not happen if the issues had been resolved. Alternatively, some issues may be discussed at the tutor meeting. The ambiguity in terminology and lack of clarity was explained by the new and transitional status of the committee structure and the need for further bedding-in of its processes. The Academy has exam board processes in place and has held boards in relation to the HND Business programme. There is some ambiguity in terminology relating to the exam boards and the recording of outcomes, as outlined under Expectation B6.

1.10   The governance methods and committee structure of the Academy are considered appropriate to the scale and complexity of the organisation. However, further work to clarify the role of key committees and increased development of the reporting processes would strengthen the quality assurance arrangements and avoid any over-reliance on one specific role. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that, by September 2017, the Academy should refine and embed further the role of the key Quality Committee and exam boards to ensure that a robust framework underpins the Academy's quality assurance system.

1.11   The review team concludes that the Academy manages its responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards in line with the requirements of its awarding organisation. The Academy has further developed its systems in recent years and extended its frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met but that the associated level of risk is moderate, as a result of a weakness in the operation of part of the academic governance structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.12   At the time of the review, the Academy was only delivering the HND Business qualification awarded by Pearson. Therefore, Pearson retains ultimate responsibility for the specification but the Academy is required to ensure that this is treated as the definitive record for the programme.

1.13   The Academy uses Pearson national-level specifications, which describe units, aims, the Qualifications and Credit Framework level and intended learning outcomes.
The specification is used by lecturers who produce module handbooks. The close collaboration between the Academy and the awarding organisation enables Expectation A2.2 to be met.

1.14   To test this Expectation the review team looked in detail at module, student and staff handbooks, along with examples of communication between the Academy and the awarding organisation. The team tested the understanding of this collaboration in meetings with academic and other staff, and also held meetings with students.

1.15   There is evidence of close working practice in the form of staff development and correspondence between the Academy and the awarding organisation. This provides a close alignment of the award specification and its delivery by the Academy. Module handbooks provide explicit learning outcomes with assessment methods and criteria. A link to the awarding organisation is provided on the Academy website to inform students of the programme.

1.16   The module handbooks are derivatives of the awarding organisation's module specifications. Academic staff are involved in their contextualisation for their students.
All assessment methods are agreed with the Director of Studies and there is evidence of staff development to underpin this.

1.17   The review team found that the Academy manages its responsibilities for the maintenance of the definitive programme record in line with the requirements of its awarding organisation. The review team concludes, therefore, that Expectation A2.2 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

1.18   As the awarding organisation, Pearson is responsible for gaining approval from Ofqual for the HND Business qualification offered by the Academy and for producing the programme specification. Ultimately, the responsibility for academic standards therefore rests with the awarding organisation.

1.19   The Academy was approved to offer the HND Business in 2012 and this was underpinned by training sessions facilitated by Pearson. The Academy ensures that it is aware of current awarding organisation requirements and regulations. The external processes for programme approval are described under Expectation B1, along with the internal procedures for course development. The Academy's processes in association with the awarding organisation enable Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.20   In testing this Expectation, the review team considered notes of meetings, the handbooks, and documentation developed by the Academy. The team also held meetings with a range of staff members and students.

1.21   The Academy works within the regulations set by its awarding organisation for the HND Business provision. The Academy selects units to deliver from a prescribed list in accordance with Pearson requirements. The documentation developed by the Academy reflects these requirements, and staff members receive training to ensure that they maintain a current understanding of their responsibilities.

1.22   The review team found that the Academy, in association with its awarding organisation, has processes in place for the approval of programmes and the securing of standards. The review team concludes, therefore, that Expectation A3.1 is met and 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

1.23   The awarding organisation, Pearson, determines the credit value and status of modules, learning outcomes and assessment criteria, along with the combination of modules for the HND in Business. Pearson also provides generic grade descriptors that must be contextualised to the assessment set.

1.24   The Academy is required to adhere to the Pearson framework and regulations in delivering and awarding the HND Business qualification. The Academy designs module handbooks and assessments in line with the Pearson guidance and has internal verification processes for these. The processes for the award of credit and qualifications at the Academy in association with the awarding organisation allow Expectation A3.2 to be met.

1.25   In testing this Expectation, the review team considered staff, student and module handbooks and assessment policies, and documentation developed by the Academy. The team also held meetings with a range of staff members and students.

1.26   The module and assessment documentation produced by the Academy aligns with the awarding organisation expectations. External examiners provide feedback on the management of academic standards and the effectiveness of assessment instruments through the external examiner reports. The May 2015 external examiner's report confirmed that the Academy now has a registration and certification policy in place, and commented on the comprehensive unit guidance, as well as identifying the need for some further contextualising of the grading criteria. Academy staff members articulated the processes followed for the setting, internal verification and marking of assessments in line with Pearson requirements.

1.27   The Academy, in association with its awarding organisation, has processes in place for the management of academic standards and associated award of credit. The review team concludes, therefore, that Expectation A3.2 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

1.28   As the awarding organisation, Pearson has the primary responsibility for reviewing the programme offered by the Academy. The external examiner provides an annual report on standards and achievement of learning outcomes and the awarding organisation provides an Annual Academic Management Review Monitoring Report that considers the Academy's response to identified actions. The Academy also has a performance review system to enable the monitoring of programmes. The processes for monitoring and review at the Academy, in addition to those of the awarding organisation, enable Expectation A3.3 to be met.

1.29   In testing this Expectation, the review team examined the self-evaluation document submitted for this review, along with information relating to the Academy's performance monitoring and review systems and meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with a range of staff members and students.

1.30   The Academy has a performance review system that is overseen by the Director of Studies and which includes a review of results, course resources, teaching and student feedback. The operation of the performance review system is discussed in more detail under Expectation B8.

1.31   The Academy is proactive in seeking advice from the awarding organisation in terms of its processes and is responsive to the feedback. The Academy therefore uses feedback from the awarding organisation to determine in-house training and feed into its in-house monitoring through the performance review process.

1.32   The review team found that, in line with the requirements of its awarding organisation, the Academy has processes in place for monitoring the programme it delivers in relation to the achievement and maintenance of academic standards. The review team concludes, therefore, that Expectation A3.3 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

1.33   As previously noted, the Academy's primary external engagement is with Pearson for the HND Business programme offered. The awarding organisation therefore takes ultimate responsibility for the design and approval of programmes and for appointing external examiners. In addition, part-time teaching staff at the Academy have experience of teaching and assessment practice in other institutions and some external examining experience. The expertise of staff members, along with the processes in place for the use of external and independent expertise with the awarding organisation, enables Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.34   In testing this Expectation the review team examined evidence including Academy policies and procedures, and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with staff members and students.

1.35   The Academy has used the wider expertise of staff members in determining the programme offer in order to maintain the appropriate academic standards. The Academy also uses feedback from the external examiner as part of its in-house staff development to improve assessment practice in the achievement of academic standards. Opportunities are provided for teaching staff to share their experience of course delivery and assessment with other members of the teaching team at the Academy.

1.36   The use of Pearson programmes and processes, along with drawing on wider staff expertise, enables external and independent expertise to be used in ensuring that academic standards are set and maintained. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.37   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The team identified one recommendation in this area and no features of good practice or affirmations.

1.38   The Academy uses the processes of its awarding organisation in order to maintain the academic standards of the HND Business qualification. The Academy also has its own internal processes, for example in relation to programme monitoring and review, which it uses to assure itself of the maintenance of these standards. The Academy has been developing its internal structures and formalising arrangements, and the recommendation in Expectation A2.1 relates to the need to refine and embed further the role of the key Quality Committee and exam boards to ensure that a robust framework underpins the Academy's quality assurance system.

1.39   All seven Expectations is this area are met. Six of these Expectations are met with a low level of risk, and A2.1 is met with a moderate level of risk to reflect the weakness in the operation of part of the academic governance structure. Therefore, the review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations at the Academy **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 Academy currently delivers the Pearson HND Business. In deciding to offer this programme, the Academy was required to follow the awarding organisation's approval processes, which are designed to ensure that academic standards are maintained and the quality of learning opportunities assured.

2.2   The decision in 2010 to offer the current Higher National programme was as a result of the Academy reviewing the current course offer in light of the changes in its operating environment, linked to a reduction in overseas student numbers and the restrictions of Tier 4 student visas. This involved close working with the awarding organisation, and the evaluation of the understanding, expertise and resources available to the Academy. Approval to offer the HND Business was obtained in 2012. The Director of Studies was responsible for driving forward the course development and approval. The Academy has subsequently introduced a Course Development Strategy that outlines its broad approach to the choice and development of courses. The review team concludes, in view of the scale of the Academy's operation, that its approach to course development enables Expectation B1 to be met.

2.3   In testing this Expectation and the Academy's approach, the review team met the Director of Studies, and senior and academic staff. The team also considered correspondence with the awarding organisation and the course approval documentation, together with the Course Development Strategy.

2.4   The Director of Studies and senior staff were able to explain the strategy used by the Academy to develop and gain approval to offer the HND Business. The role of the Director of Studies in taking ultimate responsibility for the strategic decision to move to the Pearson award was confirmed. Acknowledgement was made in 2010 of the Academy's need to refocus its course offer to meet the changing external operating environment in terms of overseas student numbers, and to provide appropriate resources to meet and ensure the students' learning experience. The correspondence between the Academy and Pearson confirmed the extensive communication undertaken to ensure the Academy followed the correct procedures to gain course approval. Academic staff explained their involvement in the processes as determining the delivery of the module content and developing the teaching, learning and assessment strategy to ensure appropriate delivery of the modules comprising the HND in Business.

2.5   The Course Development Strategy has not, to date, been used; however, the Strategy does set out a framework that reflects the Academy's approach and clearly states the responsibility of the Director of Studies in the process.

2.6   Based on the Academy's use of the awarding organisation's processes, the existence of the Course Development Strategy and the scale of the Academy's course offer, the review team concludes that Expectation B1 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

2.7   The Academy has an admissions policy that is guided by the Quality Code and managed by the Head of Administration, with overall responsibility resting with the Director of Studies. All students who meet the course entry criteria are interviewed by the Director of Studies, or the Head of Administration if the Director is not available. Telephone interviews or interviews online are conducted for overseas applicants. The admissions process, underpinned by a policy that establishes equitable and transparent criteria, allows Expectation B2 to be met.

2.8   In testing this Expectation the review team met students and discussed their experience of the admissions process. Meetings were also held with a range of staff members and the team scrutinised policy documents, including those relating to examples of the interview process.

2.9   Course information for prospective students is available on the Academy's website, along with terms and conditions and application forms. The website includes information on course fees and potential fees for late submission of assignments or mitigating circumstances (see paragraph 3.5).

2.10   The Academy strives to ensure that it implements ethical recruitment practices and has processes in place to ensure that students have the appropriate level of English language skills for admission onto the programme. In 2013 the Academy had 450 applicants to the HND course. Eight experienced lecturers were used to interview the applicants and 80 students were recruited. Records were kept of those unsuccessful students, a number of whom the Academy identified as applicants who did not have genuine documents. The Academy acknowledges significant challenges in relation to student funding for the initial recruitment to the HND Business programme and identifies that this led to poor levels of achievement in the 2013 cohort of students. The subsequent and current recruitment processes work more effectively, as more rigour is attached to the students' English abilities and the effectiveness of the English development classes has improved.

2.11   Students whom the review team met explained that they found out about the HND Business and the Academy via the website or through recommendations. They confirmed that the next stage in the process involved meeting with the Director of Studies and that they were satisfied with the information they were given.

2.12   The admissions policy advises students as to how they can make complaints and appeals regarding admissions decisions.

2.13   There is evidence to show that the Academy implements its admissions policy and is committed to fair recruitment, admission and selection of students. Students commented positively on their experiences and the support provided. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.14   The Academy has a Learning and Teaching Strategy, which states that it is informed by the student body and that the Academy will provide a distinctive international learning environment, and an environment that is intellectually challenging and applied to the employability of students.

2.15   The Academy receives an Annual Monitoring Report from Pearson. A performance review, managed by the Director of Studies, is undertaken, with input from a variety of sources including students, staff and managers. This review includes the use of a scorecard system, which is used to monitor student progress.

2.16   Lecturing staff are appointed by the Director of Studies and there is a staff training and development system in place, underpinned by a staff development policy. The Academy has a peer and teaching observation process, which links to the staff development plans and appraisal process.

2.17   The process of annual monitoring and performance review, which incorporates regular feedback from students on their learning experience, provides the opportunity for systematic review and enhancement for the Academy. This, along with regular reviews of the performance of lecturers and support for their development, allows Expectation B3 to be met.

2.18   In testing this Expectation, the review team met students and staff, including the Director of Studies, to confirm the effectiveness of the review systems within the Academy. The team scrutinised the annual monitoring and performance review documents along with committee meeting minutes. The team also considered the CVs of staff members, along with staff training and development documents, including the peer observation and appraisal processes.

2.19   Students whom the team met are very enthusiastic and supportive of their learning experience at the Academy. They commented upon the friendliness and openness of the teaching staff and referred to a 'family' atmosphere at the Academy. They have two formal opportunities per term to comment via feedback forms, which are monitored by the Director of Studies and which feed into the performance review process. There have been improvements in the assignment feedback process as a result of consultation with students and feedback from Pearson. The Academy has introduced a requirement for students to submit work for three formative feedback opportunities prior to the summative feedback. The students commented favourably on the provision of the English development class, which includes study skills. The class is delivered on a weekly basis and its content is informed by the tutors and overseen by the Director of Studies; the English development class was acknowledged as good practice in the Academy's previous review.

2.20   The majority of tutors are employed on a part-time basis and their recruitment is managed by the Director of Studies. Staff members make effective use of a scorecard system and, although it is considered laborious by tutors, the Academy uses it to monitor and make decisions on the progress of students. Personalised learning plans are used to support students

who are experiencing difficulties due to a variety of reasons,
such as medical issues.

2.21   There is a staff development policy that places the onus upon staff to take
responsibility for their development. Subject development is reliant upon the tutor's own
resources, in some cases their work with other institutions. The Academy is flexible in
accommodating staff development needs and can rearrange classes to fit the needs of a tutor.
A staff development table also exists, identifying tutor training events that are held regularly and
covering mainly pedagogic matters. Administration staff are included and specific training
events have been held for them.

2.22   The Academy operates a teaching and peer observation scheme, including
opportunities for more senior tutors to observe colleagues in the classroom on an unannounced
basis. The results from this feed into the performance review and inform future tutor training
agendas. The observation scheme is closely linked to the staff appraisal process and students
are satisfied with the teaching they receive.

2.23   The Academy has processes in place to support and improve learning and teaching.
The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B3 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

2.24   The Academy aims to provide students with high levels of support and the best opportunities to develop and progress in their careers. Systems to monitor student progress, identify support needs and implement personalised learning plans are part of the Academy's approach, along with the allocation of resources and performance review process.

2.25   The procurement and allocation of resources at the Academy is closely managed by the Director of Studies. Learning resources are identified by tutors and students and communicated to the Director of Studies by a variety of means, including tutor and student meetings as well as through module reviews. Students with additional support needs are identified through completion of an application form, interview and English test, and personalised learning plans are made available. Attendance policies are in place and registers are taken. Progression records are kept showing the completion of units and marks attained by students. The Academy's arrangements to enable students to develop their potential would allow Expectation B4 to be met.

2.26   In testing this Expectation, the review team held meetings with students, along with teaching, administration and management staff. The team also viewed the online web portal and examined a variety of documents, including those relating to the resources and support available at the Academy.

2.27   All students are interviewed prior to enrolment on the HND Business course and all attend an induction process. There are no formal personal tutors nor tutorials but the scorecard method is used to monitor the progress of students and identify any additional needs. This method was introduced to overcome issues around, and improve, the calibre of students on the course.

2.28   English development study lessons are provided in addition to the taught programme. The English development class resulted from the Academy gathering and analysing information from student interviews in 2013, and is used to help improve students' performance on assignments. They are highly regarded by students and are used by tutors to reinforce study skills.

2.29   There is evidence of provision being made for students with learning difficulties, with an underpinning policy and personalised learning plans. In addition to opportunities in the application process, lecturers may identify the need for providing a personalised plan for students when they complete the formative feedback form for work handed in. There is an attendance policy, stated in the student handbook, and registers are taken at every class; these are monitored by the administration team and contribute to the scorecard system.

2.30   All resourcing decisions are taken by the Director of Studies and informed by the performance review process and communication with staff and students. Students whom the review team met have no problems in accessing resources to study and appreciate that tutors are readily available. Tutors recommend resources that are accessible on the electronic portal and in the Academy library, which has a deposit system to ensure that books are returned within the 20-day loan period. Students can make use of the British Library, which is within walking distance. The Academy also provides access to computing facilities within the building, which is wireless enabled.

2.31   The electronic portal hosts a range of documents and learning resources available to students. The system is due to be improved, as set out in the Web Portal Action Plan, to make it more attractive and informative, and to include access to core texts. A new member of staff has been tasked with this work.

2.32   The Academy supplied retention information on students who had enrolled in August/September and October 2013, which showed retention rates of 56 and 60 per cent respectively. The retention figure has improved significantly with the October 2014, January 2015 and February 2015 intakes to 97, 97 and 100 per cent respectively, as noted in the September 2015 data return. The lower figures in 2013 were attributed to a difficulty with the funding available to students, which resulted in poor attendance and demotivation. It was further explained that some of these students had probably returned to their home country. However, the results for the 2013 cohorts suggest that plagiarism was also an issue. The improvement for the later cohorts may be attributed to developments in recruitment and support practices (as 'the students recruited in 2014 were selected using new English tests' in addition to a document check list) and the more timely receipt of funding. The Academy's performance review highlights that results have improved and that more support has been added, along with improvements to the English development course. At the August 2015 exam board meeting, the Academy noted a reduction in plagiarism compared to when the course started.

2.33   At the start of the review, none of the first cohort of students enrolled in August/September and October 2013 for the two-year HND Business course had completed all 16 units. These students finished the taught elements of the course in June 2015 and were then expected to submit their outstanding work. The Academy expected some of the remaining students from the September 2013 intake to complete work in time for a January 2016 examinations board and contacted the Student Loans Company in August 2015 to confirm that students could be eligible for an additional year's funding in order to complete their course at the Academy. The Academy was prepared to support the 2013 students to the completion of their award and cited the Pearson registration period as enabling students to take longer than two years to complete their studies. However, the HND Business is advertised as a two-year programme and delivered in these timescales unless students experience any mitigating circumstances. The Academy reinforces the need for timely assignment submissions, as shown by an emailed response to an extension request, where the Academy reminded a student that a three-week extension could not be granted unless there were valid reasons. In order to enable students to develop their potential and achieve, the review team **recommends** that, by April 2017, the Academy ensures that there is a clearly articulated and formalised plan to enable students to complete their programme of study by the expected end date of their course.

2.34   The Academy provides the results of units on the noticeboard to inform students of their progress and to alert students who need to report reasons for their absence to the Academy. However, this method of communication can only be accessed by those students still visiting the Academy premises. When asked about the methods used to communicate, for example the outcomes of examination board meetings to all students including those who are not visiting the premises, the Academy explained that it is also done by email if the students have submitted work in time for the Board. The Academy has progression lists to show the status of students and this does not show any students from a specific cohort having completed year one. The Academy details in this document that students who have not fully completed can still contact the Academy and will be supported, although this will require the consent of the Quality Committee if it is after a specified date. The review team identified that the Academy requires a clearly articulated, reliable and consistently implemented system for identifying and notifying the accurate status of students. Without such a system, its ability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its processes for enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is impaired. The review team **recommends** that, by April 2017, the Academy clarifies and consistently implements the processes used to communicate with each student as to his/her status on the course.

2.35   The Academy has an internal progression policy covering resubmissions, which states that 'in order to progress from one term to the next, students must pass at least two of the four units'. At the time of the review visit, the Academy had published version one of this document, dated May 2015, on the portal for students, although in the documentary evidence supplied, version one of this document was dated April 2014. However, there is evidence that students from the 2013 cohorts had progressed to the second year of the HND programme without meeting the requirements of this policy. The Academy explains this as being the result of the no progression policy existing for the 2013 cohort and that it would be unfair to implement this retrospectively.

2.36   While the review team noted issues with the first cohorts of students, which the Academy attributes to funding, there is evidence to show that students in the later cohorts were on track with their studies and that a higher number are remaining on the course. This has been attributed to improved attendance and submission of work, and therefore more feedback to students. As discussed under Expectation B6, the Academy has put in place systems to deal with plagiarism and has developed formative assessment to ensure that the more recent cohorts are on target to complete their studies.

2.37   Overall, the review team found that, although the Academy had put in place arrangements to support a cohort, these were not in place at the commencement of the course and, as a consequence, earlier cohorts were disadvantaged by this in not having the support to achieve their academic potential. While the Academy is willing to support earlier student cohorts to complete their studies, the emphasis is placed on the students to drive this forward. There is a lack of evidence of a formalised and consistently implemented system to ensure that students from the initial cohorts will complete the qualification. The review team concludes, therefore, that Expectation B4 is not met and that the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.38   The Academy's statement on student engagement recognises the importance of listening and acting on the informed student voice. Both informal and formal mechanisms are used to gather feedback from students on the quality of their learning experience.

2.39   The size and nature of the Academy provides the opportunity for the Director of Studies to meet informally with students by being on site daily and by undertaking teaching duties. Formal student feedback is obtained using questionnaires. Student representatives are also appointed and meet the Director of Studies to discuss matters relating to their experience of the Academy and their course. The Academy's approach to student engagement enables Expectation B5 to be met.

2.40   In testing this Expectation the review team considered the Academy's statement on 'Student Engagement at LBBA', outcomes of student surveys, the notes of student representatives' meetings, and correspondence between the Director of Studies and student representatives. The team also held meetings with staff and students to explore the Academy's approach to student engagement.

2.41   The outcomes of student surveys are mainly positive and shared with student representatives. Students whom the review team met were able to identify a number of improvements as a result of feedback to the Academy. These include improved handbooks, policies on progression and resubmission, and increased awareness of grade descriptors within assessment. Student representatives were actively involved in writing the student submission and determining the choice of the employability theme. The Director of Studies also meets informally with student groups and provides direct feedback to them on matters discussed.

2.42   The Academy invites student representatives to attend meetings of the Quality Committee but these meetings have been held on a Saturday. Student representatives were invited to attend a meeting in August 2015; however, no student representative was available to undertake this because it fell within the holiday period. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by April 2017, the Academy schedules the Quality Committee meetings to maximise student attendance.

2.43   Based on the size of the Academy and the approaches adopted to involve and engage students, the review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.44   Assessment requirements are outlined in the BTEC Centre Guide for Managing Quality (Level 4 to 7). The Academy provides documented guidance to staff and students through handbooks, policies and specific advice on assessment requirements. These documents include information on the recognition of prior learning; assessment planning; internal verification; internal progression; certification; and exam board operation. Formative and summative assessment is used at the Academy. Staff members are suitably qualified, and training is provided to staff to support the delivery, management and security of assessment. Processes are in place for the management of late submission, extensions and mitigating circumstances, along with systems to ensure the accurate recording of assessment results.

2.45   Students are provided with a programme of skills development to support their academic writing and understanding of academic misconduct. Plagiarism-detection software is used by the Academy and also made available to students. The Academy's approach to assessment and the associated processes enables Expectation B6 to be met.

2.46   In testing this Expectation the review team considered the handbooks, policies and specific advice relating to assessment; the notes of the tutor training, administration and Quality Committee meetings, and the exam board; and correspondence with staff, students and the awarding organisation. The team also held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students to explore the understanding of the Academy's assessment processes.

2.47   The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy covers both how an applicant is assessed for a place at the Academy and the process for recognising and accrediting prior learning. This process reflects the requirements of Pearson. The recognition and accreditation of prior learning for the achievement of credit has not yet been used by the Academy.

2.48   The guidance in the staff, module and student handbooks reflects Pearson's requirements and provides a framework for the delivery of assessment. Assessment procedures are overseen by the Director of Studies; these are adhered to by staff, and in-house training is provided for staff to support them in their role within the assessment process. The external examiner reports confirm that the systems in place meet the awarding organisation requirements.

2.49   Students are supported in developing academic writing skills through the English development course and lecture programme. Plagiarism-detection software is available to students to help ensure that their assessed work is their own. This is overseen by the Head of Administration, who is available to support students in the use of the software. Students understand their responsibilities regarding plagiarism and appreciate the steps taken by the Academy to help them with academic writing.

2.50   Arrangements are in place for students who have mitigating circumstances; students whom the review team met were aware of this process. The review team identified that there were a range of forms relating to late submissions and extensions of deadlines. These forms also made reference to different financial penalties being imposed.

An explanation was provided by the Academy during the visit on how the forms were used and interrelated. However, this interrelationship was not clear within the documents or the student handbook. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by September 2017, the Academy rationalises and clarifies to students and staff the processes relating to assignment extensions and late submission of work.

2.51   Processes are in place to ensure that individual registration and certification claims can be traced to the certificate that is issued for each student. This is in line with the awarding organisation requirements and confirmed by the external examiner. Guidelines have been produced for the exam board and these set out its purpose, regulations, membership decisions and confidentiality, with some information included from the BTEC Centre Guide in relation to assessment boards. The board met in August 2015 to confirm final module grades, although no full award of the Pearson HND Business was due to be made until spring 2016. The exam board minutes provide a summary of the discussion that took place. They do not, however, provide detail of the decisions made for each student and the timescales for students being made aware of decisions relating to module performance and progression. The review team was presented with a progression results list that used a range of terminology, such as resubmission and plagiarism, to describe referral. In holding exam boards (or assessment boards) the provider should ensure that the terminology used to describe the decisions reached aligns with the BTEC Centre Guide, and that there is an adequate record of how decisions were made. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by April 2017, the Academy ensures the consistent use of terminology in exam boards' decisions in line with the BTEC centre guidance. The review team also endorses the recommendation under Expectation A2.1 relating to the role of the exam board.

2.52   Overall, the review team found that the Academy implements its processes for assessment to enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the learning outcomes. Therefore, based on the evidence received and the understanding by staff and students of assessment, the review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.53   The external examiner for the HND Business programme is appointed and trained by Pearson to fulfil their role and responsibilities. The Academy is proactive in its relationship with Pearson and the external examiner and in responding to the feedback received from them. The Director of Studies ensures that staff and student representatives are aware of the external examiner reports and that the actions identified are followed up. The Academy's approach to the use of external examiners enables Expectation B7 to be met.

2.54   In testing this Expectation, the review team considered the external examiner's reports from the awarding organisation in addition to internal and external correspondence. The team also held meetings with staff and students to ascertain their understanding of the role of the external examiner.

2.55   External examiner reports are supportive and recognise the cooperation provided by the Academy. The Director of Studies reads the external examiner reports and disseminates these to academic and support staff. The reports are used by the Academy as part of the in-house staff development sessions to improve assessment practice relating to the use of feedback and contextualising of grading. Academic staff recognise the value of using external examiner reports in this way.

2.56   Students are aware of the role of the external examiner and met them in May 2015 as part of the visit programme. The Director of Studies has made hard copies of the external examiner reports available to student representatives, who valued the opportunity to see external feedback on the course.

2.57   The Academy responds to feedback from the external examiners and this is evident in changes made to documentation and processes. Pearson confirmed in its Annual Academic Management Review Monitoring Report 2014-15 that the Academy had addressed issues raised in the external examiner report to its satisfaction.

2.58   There is evidence to show effective use of external examiner feedback and an understanding by staff and students of the role of the external examiner. The review team concludes that Expectation B7 is met and that 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

2.59   The Academy has a process of performance review that is used to monitor and review the programme offered. This process, overseen and managed by the Director of Studies, draws on information gathered by the Academy relating to nine key areas and results in the production of an annual action plan. Until January 2014, the action plan was monitored, informally, through the various meetings held at the Academy. For 2015-16, the action plan was to be monitored by the Quality Committee. The Academy's approach to course monitoring for its one programme enables Expectation B8 to be met.

2.60   In testing this Expectation the review team examined the Academy's approach to monitoring and review and met the Director of Studies, along with senior, academic and support staff. The team also looked at the notes relating to the performance review database, the action plan and notes of meetings, and the schedule of planned meetings.

2.61   Performance review is overseen and managed by the Director of Studies and focuses on nine key areas: students' feedback; scorecard; appraisal/observation; policies; exam results; communication at the Academy; course products; initial assessment; and student numbers. The extensive, primarily paper-based, information required to support the performance review process is provided by the administration team. In particular, it was identified by the Academy that information relating to student feedback questionnaires and the scorecard were particularly resource intensive. Staff members are aware of the outputs from performance review and their use within the Academy. The action plan for 2015-16 provided a structured framework that identified the information collected from performance review, intended outcomes and actions, target dates and responsibilities, reporting lines and evaluation. The Quality Committee met in January 2016 to undertake the first formal minuted review of the action plan.

2.62   Performance review provides the Academy with a process for monitoring and reviewing the programme offered. Staff commented on the challenges involved in managing elements of the performance review process; in particular, undertaking surveys and maintaining the scorecard. In addition, any proposed growth in student numbers will need to be factored into the operation of the performance review process. In view of the level of resources required to support the performance review process, the review team **recommends** that, by September 2017, the Academy develops a strategy to ensure the sustainability of the performance review process. The review team would also reiterate the recommendation under Expectation A2.1 relating to the role of the Quality Committee.

2.63   Based on the monitoring and review process adopted in relation to the scale of the Academy's current course offer, the review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. As the sustainability of the process and the role of the Quality Committee has not yet been fully realised, the associated level of risk is moderate and reflects a weakness in the operation of part of the Academy's academic meeting and governance structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.64   The Academy follows the guidance provided by Pearson for the management of academic appeals. The Academy has a complaints procedure that is built around a two-stage approach of informal and formal resolution of the complaint. Students are made aware of the existence of the Academy's policies and procedures at induction, and information is made available in the student handbook and on the portal. The Academy's approach to complaints and academic appeals enables Expectation B9 to be met.

2.65   In testing this Expectation, the review team examined the operation of the appeals and complaints procedures through considering the information in the student handbook, the complaints procedure and documentation relating to the only formal complaint received by the Academy in 2011. The team also held meetings with the Director of Studies, senior management, academic and support staff, and students.

2.66   Staff members are aware of the complaints and appeals procedures and their operation. The Academy places a strong emphasis, due to its size and scale, on resolving any complaints and appeals informally. A desk diary is kept to record matters occurring at the Academy. Students confirmed this approach and their awareness of where to find information on the appeals and complaints procedures.

2.67   The availability of independent third party involvement is set out in the complaints procedure. To date, as previously noted, there has only been one complaint, which was acknowledged by the complainant as being satisfactorily resolved.

2.68   Based on the evidence received, and understanding by staff and students of the appeals and complaints procedures, the review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met and that 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 organisation are implemented securely and managed effectively.

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

Findings

2.69   The Academy does not have any arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the awarding organisation; therefore, this Expectation does not apply.

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.70   The Academy does not deliver research degrees; therefore, this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.71   In reaching its judgements about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Seven out of the nine applicable Expectations in this area are met with low risk, one is met with a moderate risk and one is not met, with a moderate risk. The team has identified six recommendations in this area, with a link to the recommendation in A2.1.

2.72   The Academy has been developing its processes and procedures to support the delivery of the HND Business. There is evidence of processes such as admissions, assessment, and complaints and appeals working in practice, but further development is required to ensure that the documentation used is contextualised. This includes the consistent use of relevant terminology that reflects Academy processes and adheres to the requirements of the awarding organisation.

2.73   The review team notes the key role of the Quality Committee and recommends that the Academy continues to develop the role of this Committee to avoid over-reliance on any one role and uses this, along with examination boards, to ensure that a robust framework underpins the Academy's quality assurance system. The Academy gathers feedback from students and aims to develop the level of student engagement in quality assurance by including students in the Quality Committee meetings. The review team makes a recommendation that the meetings of this committee are scheduled to maximise the opportunities for students to attend.

2.74   The Academy has processes in place for the submission of assignments, and arrangements for late submissions or mitigating circumstances. However, there are multiple documents for these, with differing information. The review team makes a recommendation that the Academy rationalises and clarifies to students and staff the processes relating to assignment extensions and late submission of work.

2.75   The review team notes the difficulties encountered with the first cohorts on the HND Business course and the improvements following the changes made by the Academy for the subsequent cohorts. However, the review team makes recommendations that the Academy ensures that students are supported to complete their programme of study by the expected end date of their course, as well as to clarify and consistently implement the processes used to communicate with each student as to his/her status on the course. These recommendations relate to Expectation B4, which the review team concludes is not met, with a moderate risk. The team acknowledges that the Academy had put in place arrangements to support the affected cohort. While the Academy was willing to support the 2013 student cohorts to complete their studies, the emphasis was placed on the students to drive this forward. There is a lack of evidence of a formalised and consistently implemented system to ensure that students from the initial cohorts were able to complete the qualification. The insufficient emphasis given to supporting students' learning in the planning of the introduction of the Pearson HND Business, and the subsequent lack of clarity about the Academy's responsibilities for communicating with each student as to his/her status on the course, means that the 2013 cohorts of students continued to be disadvantaged.

2.76   The Academy has a programme monitoring process that works for its current level of provision. The process is clear and implemented to ensure that progress is checked and areas for development are identified. However, the Academy acknowledges that some of the processes are resource-intensive; the review team makes a recommendation that the Academy develops a strategy to ensure the sustainability of the performance review process.

2.77   Overall, the Academy is committed to providing support, teaching and learning opportunities that enable students to reach their potential. In reaching its conclusion, the review

team acknowledges that the Academy has recently made improvements in the quality of student learning opportunities since the initial introduction of the HND Business course. Students whom the review team met appreciate the support and learning opportunities available at the Academy and were positive about the arrangements in place.

2.78   While further development is required, the recommendations made by the review team relate to amendments that will not require or result in major structural, operational or procedural change. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the Academy **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 provision of information at the Academy is managed by the Director of Studies, in conjunction with the Quality Committee and the examination board, where information including the website and student and module handbooks is discussed. Responsibility for signing off accuracy of information resides with the Director of Studies. The Academy identifies its website as one of its most important tools to communicate with students and other stakeholders about the higher education opportunities on offer. The site is designed to include information about the Academy, its mission and status, as well as course details. The Academy ensures that the website is updated according to CTH and BTEC requirements (the courses to which it is currently recruiting). It actively seeks feedback and approval from its current awarding organisations on the website information published.

3.2 The Academy has a web portal which acts as a document repository for information such as handbooks and policies, and which has recently been improved following a review where duplicate information was deleted. It has separate sections for students and staff. The Academy uses a noticeboard situated at the reception area and this is used to communicate with students, providing, for example, induction information and assessment results. Email is also used to disseminate information to staff and students.

3.3 The management functions and procedures in place at the Academy would enable Expectation C to be met. In testing this Expectation the review team scrutinised a range of documentation published in hard copy and via electronic media made available to staff, prospective, current and former students, and other stakeholders. The review team also met a range of staff and students.

3.4 The action plan from the QAA review report in May 2014 includes an advisable recommendation that the Academy should 'formalise the updating of documentation'. The review team heard of the processes the Academy had put in place for updating documentation and core policies. This involved external benchmarking through dialogue with awarding bodies, review by the Quality Committee including, where appropriate, involvement of student representatives, and formal sign-off by the Director of Studies. Staff and students whom the team met commented on the accuracy and helpfulness of the documentation. The review team concluded that the Academy had addressed this recommendation.

3.5 The Academy has a website that advertises its courses and provides information about studying and student life. The website is clearly laid out and covers, among other things, the Academy's mission, the application procedures, fees and additional course costs. At the time of the review the website included details of the HND Business and the CTH courses to which the Academy is recruiting. Students commented positively on the useful nature of the website and on the accuracy of the information, which helped them to make informed decisions when applying. Core course information was also provided as part of the induction week, which all students experience before they confirm their registration on a course.

3.6 There is a lecturer handbook which covers expectations of teaching staff and provides references to core policies. Lecturing staff also have access to the portal where core institutional policies are stored. Staff whom the team met commented positively on their

involvement in the development and review of institutional policies and reported that they were provided with access to core documentation that enables them to carry out their duties effectively.

3.7   Via the portal, students receive a student handbook that contains detailed information about the course and the Academy. Individual module handbooks are developed by module tutors and approved by the Quality Committee. The module handbooks include the learning outcomes, grading criteria and assessment information, as well as generic information about plagiarism and referencing. Students commented on the helpfulness of this information when preparing for assignments. The review team considered that appropriate module-level information was provided to students although noted that some reading lists might be reviewed to ensure that students are guided to more current resources and the latest editions of standard texts.

3.8   Both staff and students reported that they find the Academy portal easy to use and understand where to find key documents and policies as well as where to go to with further queries.

3.9   The review team concludes that the Academy produces information for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Therefore, Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low because of the processes the Academy has in place to include the views of key stakeholders when routinely reviewing and updating policies.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.11   The review team found that the Academy provides a range of clear and useful information for staff and students. The Expectation in this section is met and the associated risk level is low. There are no areas of good practice, recommendations or affirmations recorded in this judgement area.

3.12   Given that the applicable Expectation is met, with a low level of risk, the review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at London Bridge Business Academy Ltd **meets** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Findings

4.1   The Academy is committed to ensuring and improving the quality of the students' learning experience and this is reflected in the Academy's mission statement, 'Education has no boundaries'. Central to this is the role of the Director of Studies, who, due to the size and scale of the Academy, is actively involved both informally and formally in its management and operation. The performance review process provides management information that allows the Director of Studies to identify issues strategically and determine the action to be taken, together with evaluating the outcomes. As a result of this approach, the Academy is able to demonstrate an approach to enhancement that has resulted in improvements in the quality of the students' learning experience. The Academy's approach to enhancement in relation to its course offer enables this Expectation to be met.

4.2   In testing the Expectation the review team met the Director of Studies, senior, academic and support staff, and students. The opportunity was also taken to explore the approach using the information provided in the documentation provided by the Academy.

4.3   The English development class resulted from the Academy gathering and analysing information from student interviews in 2013. As a result of the analysis the Director of Studies identified that students were not used to undertaking assignments and, as a consequence, that there was a need to develop their English communication skills. In order to address this, the Director of Studies led the development and design of a course of 10 sessions to supplement the writing skills of the students in supporting their study.
This included sessions on report writing, presenting information, plagiarism, referencing and how to complete an assessment. Feedback from the student group survey in March 2014 was positive about the value of the English development course in preparing them for assignment writing. In 2015 steps were taken to improve the English development course further to meet the needs of students, in particular to develop verbal presentation skills and job-seeking skills. A comprehensive written survey of both day and evening students was undertaken in May 2015, and the outcomes analysed and considered by the Director of Studies. This demonstrated that students benefited from the course and that it should be continued for future student groups. The value of the English development course was also confirmed and highlighted during meetings with staff and students.

4.4   Tutor training meetings are used to share good practice among the teaching staff. This may include sharing examples of good practice and/or a member of staff facilitating a session drawing on their wider knowledge. Teaching staff spoke positively of this approach in the meeting with the review team.

4.5   The strategic leadership of the Director of Studies, the management information from the performance review, and the moves by the Academy to develop further the role of the Quality Committee provide an approach to enhancement that is proportionate to scale of the Academy. The review team would, however, endorse the recommendation under Expectation B8 relating to the development of a strategy to ensure the sustainability of the performance review process.

4.6   The review team found that the Academy is taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of the students' 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

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.7   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this area, but there is a link to the recommendation under Expectation B8 as the team reinforces the need for the Academy to ensure the sustainability of its processes.

4.8   The Academy is committed to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. There are systems in place to enable staff members to share good practice, and initiatives are driven from a strategic, institutional level. The development and review of the English development course illustrates the Academy's approach to enhancement through strategic leadership, gathering and analysing management information, identifying a plan of action and reviewing the outcomes.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The Academy places emphasis on the increased employability of its students. An initial assessment is made at the interview stage and this informs the support needed in the English development classes. Students are encouraged to undertake work experience to help inform their studies, although this is not a formal part of the assessed programme. Tutors incorporate vocational themes into their teaching and assessments.

5.2 At the interview stage, questions are asked about the work experience and career ambitions of the students. This information is used to help students with career goals and to inform the support required from the English development classes. These classes develop key employability skills, including CV preparation and interview skills. Classes also include an emphasis on practical activity relating to the use of presentations, report writing, minute taking, employment legislation, job analysis and IT skills.

5.3 Students have been encouraged to undertake work between the first and second year to provide relevant experience for their second-year units; those whom the review team met are aware of the importance of gaining summer work and its contribution to their studies. The Academy has directly supported students in finding employment in the hotel industry by arranging interviews, which resulted in four students gaining positions.

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 22-25 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook.

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

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx.

Academic standards
The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Award
A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Awarding organisation
An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement
The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision

and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Self-evaluation document
A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

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

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

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

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

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