



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of London College of International Business Studies Ltd

January 2016

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at London College of International Business Studies Ltd. The review took place from 26 to 28 January 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Kevin Kendall
- Ms Alexa Christou.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by London College of International Business Studies 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)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK [higher education providers](#) expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

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

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

A 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.

In reviewing London College of International Business Studies 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,<sup>2</sup> 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 given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

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

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859)

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about London College of International Business Studies Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at London College of International Business Studies Ltd.

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

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at London College of International Business Studies:

- the strategic and effective integration of field visits, classroom delivery and the VLE use to develop students as engaged and independent learners (Expectation B3).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to London College of International Business Studies Ltd.

By June 2016:

- adopt a consistent approach to making external examiner reports available to all students (Expectation B7).

By September 2016:

- strengthen the clarity and precision of the assessment regulations governing Pearson awards (Expectation A2.1).

By January 2017:

- further develop programme and module information including learning outcomes provided to current students at the start of their programme and throughout their studies (Expectation C)
- formalise the processes for checking that information about higher education is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectation C).

By April 2017:

- strengthen links with employers to support the strategic development of the curriculum and placement opportunities for students (Expectations B1 and B10).

## Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action that the London College of International Business Studies Ltd is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the work being done to improve and formalise processes for managing and monitoring academic misconduct (Expectation B6).

## Theme: Student Employability

The College has developed employability as an underpinning theme over the last two years and seeks to provide students with skills that will enhance their employability.

The College links theory to the real world by examining real companies. Internships are available and there is an extensive field trip programme which uses 'London as a learning laboratory'.

Student assessment is related to employability skills and the College has recently appointed a Director of Careers and also provides workshops on a wide range of job-related skills such as CV writing and interview techniques.

## Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at London College of International Business Studies Ltd during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

## About London College of International Business Studies Ltd

The London College of International Business Studies Ltd (the College) is a relatively small alternative provider located in the Canada Water area of London with a largely international student body who are drawn from a wide range of countries. In August 2015 the College moved from its premises in Holborn to new, larger premises in Surrey Quays, south-east London. The College has 147 students being taught at Levels 4 to 7 on business-related qualifications with a focus on employability. The qualifications offered are:

- Pearson HNC/HND Business and Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership
- Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Master of Business Administration (MBA) (Top-ups) validated by the University of Business and International Studies (UBIS).

Until recently the College offered Level 4 and 5 awards validated by the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH) but these have now been taught out and although the College is an approved centre for CTH courses until March 2016 there are no students on CTH courses currently.

The College employs six full-time academic staff and a number of sessional staff.

The College states that it aims to embed the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education to provide a framework aimed at 'Inspiring and championing responsible management education, research and thought leadership globally'

The College had a monitoring visit by QAA under Review for Educational Oversight in October 2014. The Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) was triggered by a number of changes at the College, particularly an increase in student numbers and the change of premises.

The College plans to change the focus of its student demographic to a more European base and is not planning to retain its Tier 4 status. It also plans to expand the number of programmes that it offers in the future.

The College currently offers awards validated by Pearson and by UBIS. UBIS is a private Swiss college validated in the Canton of Geneva. It is not accredited on a national basis in Switzerland but appears to be meeting the expectations of its awarding organisation. Foreign degrees are not within scope of Part A of the Code as the standards are not set according to a UK framework.

The College has made good progress in addressing the recommendations from its last review. It has strengthened oversight of higher education provision; made significant progress with the use of the virtual learning environment and introduced a teaching observation system.

## Explanation of the findings about London College of International Business Studies 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Findings**

1.1 The College currently offers the HNC (Level 4) and HND (Level 5) in Business, and the Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (Level 7) which are awarded by Pearson, and the BBA (level 6) and MBA (Level 7) which are awarded by the University of Business and International Studies (UBIS) in Geneva. The College has made a submission to Pearson for approval of a pathway in Public Relations on the HNC/D and the Certificate in Strategic Management and Leadership programmes. The College also has British Accreditation Council accreditation following an Inspection in November 2013. Qualifications awarded by Pearson are at the appropriate level on FHEQ and align with the requirements of the *Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)* and the *National Occupational Standards (NOS)*. The Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership is also awarded by Pearson as part of their BTEC professional qualification titles and conform to the requirements of the QCF.

1.2 UBIS is not recognised as university education in Switzerland but has authorisation by the Geneva Canton as a private school, and the awards are not written to align with the FHEQ. Criteria for the award of the programmes are generic award benchmarks and the College Quality Assurance Handbook states that standards are assured by 'Ensuring that all delivered programmes are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor, level descriptor

and generic assessment criteria, and operate within the obligations and regulations of the appropriate awarding bodies'.

1.3 Not all of the modules on UBIS-validated programmes have module learning outcomes but the College uses standardised assessment briefs across all Pearson and University programmes. These give details of assignment tasks against the learning outcomes being assessed and enables a standardisation of teaching, learning and assessment across comparable levels with the two different awarding organisations. This would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.4 The review team examined a range of documents relating to the setting and maintenance of academic standards including agreements between the awarding organisations and the College, the awarding bodies' academic regulations, approval documents and programme specifications. The team also scrutinised the College virtual learning environment (VLE) and met the President and CEO, senior staff, academic staff and professional and support staff to explore the relationship between the College and its awarding bodies.

1.5 Pearson programmes are being managed effectively and align with external benchmarks as described above. UBIS programmes do not have a detailed programme specification but do have programme learning outcomes. Some modules do not have learning outcomes and those that do are not mapped to the programme learning outcomes. However, the College is currently using Pearson external benchmarks and assessment methods effectively to ensure consistency across the levels of both awarding organisations.

1.6 The review team confirmed that the College fulfils the requirements of the awarding organisations effectively and ensures that academic standards are set and maintained with reference to appropriate external benchmarks. The team therefore concludes 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**

1.7 The College is split into four areas of responsibility under the President and CEO, namely academic, student services, marketing and admissions, and operations. Staff are allocated to each of these areas and report to a line manager with overall responsibility. The College states that academic governance is regulated by the activities of its academic committee structure. Boards and Committees include Academic Board, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), the Teaching, Learning and Development Committee (TLDC), the Programmes Committees, the Examinations Committee, the Mitigating Circumstances Committee, the Disciplinary Committee, and the Appeals Committee. The Senior Management Group is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the College. The Senior Management Group comprises the Chief Operations Officer, the Registrar, the Head of Admissions and the Associate Dean.

1.8 The College states that there are two sets of regulations; firstly those of the awarding bodies that govern the learning outcomes, broad structure and content, and assessment; secondly the College's own academic regulations that mirror those of the awarding organisation and seek to meet the requirements of the UK's regulatory framework.

1.9 Pearson regulations and guidance are used by the College as are the regulations and quality documents produced by UBIS. The College's Quality Assurance Handbook is a fairly comprehensive document which includes sections on academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement, programme design and approval, recruitment and admissions, learning and teaching, student support, student engagement, assessment, monitoring and review, complaints and public information. These regulations, quality documents and the College's line management and committee structure would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.10 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the College's processes by scrutinising documents produced by the awarding bodies and the College's own publications, for example the Quality Assurance Handbook. The team also met the College President and CEO, senior staff and academic staff, professional and support staff and students.

1.11 The College has a staffing and committee structure suitable to manage these awards and is approved to deliver them by Pearson and UBIS. The College to a large extent relies on the academic regulations of its awarding bodies. These are generally effective in determining the award of academic credit or qualifications but there is some inconsistency in the practice of assessment, for example, submission policy, assessment turnaround policy and resit policy. Assessment procedures are referred to in the Quality Assurance Handbook and programme handbooks, but the review team **recommends** that the College strengthen the clarity and precision of the assessment regulations governing Pearson awards.

1.12 Academic frameworks and regulations are in place and are generally effective. The review team concludes that Expectation 2.1 is met but the level of risk is moderate due to inconsistencies in assessment processes and weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's academic governance structures.

**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**

1.13 The College states that the UBIS awards structure, learning outcomes, assessment and approaches to learning and development, and all approval documents and specifications are retained by the Registrar's office who have the responsibility to maintain them for review and oversight by UBIS. Programme and module specifications are available in programme handbooks and for Pearson programmes, they are also available on their website. Programme handbooks are posted on the VLE as are the module specifications in their respective sections.

1.14 The College has a definitive record of each programme in the Programme Handbook, which it uses as a reference point for course information and to construct schemes of work, assessments and marketing material. Programme specifications are reviewed by the College as required and changes approved by the respective awarding organisation. This would enable the College to meet this Expectation.

1.15 The team examined the agreements with the awarding bodies, the programme handbooks, module specifications and the VLE. The team also spoke to senior and academic staff and students at the College about their engagement with the definitive record of each programme.

1.16 The definitive record of each programme is available in the programme handbooks and this serves as the approved document by the awarding bodies. This is satisfactory for Pearson programmes as the definitive record of each programme is also maintained on their website. However, this is less clear for UBIS programmes as, for example, some of the published module specifications do not have module learning outcomes.

1.17 The review team confirms that College staff are aware of the requirements set out in the programme specifications and ensure that the information regarding courses is aligned to this. The team considers that appropriate processes are in place for maintaining definitive records and these are used appropriately by staff. The team therefore concludes 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 Pearson is responsible for setting appropriate academic standards at the point of design and approval of the Higher National (HN) qualifications. Beyond initial approval, Pearson is also responsible for ongoing relevance and validity, modification and continuing recognition by Ofqual. Pearson qualifications meet the UK thresholds for academic standards at Levels 4, 5 and 7 in the QCF. The design of HN awards requires centres to deliver a mandatory set of units and to make a selection from a range of specialist units determined by local needs. Centre level responsibility for development and approval focuses on the design of effective learning materials and a learning and teaching strategy which meets the learning outcomes of the qualification.

1.19 The BBA Top-up at Level 6 and the MBA Top-up at Level 7 are approved by UBIS.

1.20 The College states that there are processes in place through the committee structure to 'discuss and debate programme provision within the College'. The College became a Pearson Approved Centre in 2012 and for the HNC/D Business, the Certificate and the Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership. The College selects modules from Pearson business specifications. The UBIS collaboration agreement provides the College with a specification for the BBA and MBA top-up programmes. Modification within this specification is limited but the review team was advised by the College President and CEO that modification of assessment modes is possible within the existing framework of learning outcomes. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.21 The team explored examples of programme development and modification through committee minutes, discussions with staff and action points noted in the annual monitoring reports (AMRs).

1.22 Discussions with academic staff confirmed that there are effective processes and procedures for academic staff to ensure that the learning materials and approaches to learning and teaching are reviewed and modified as appropriate to ensure their continued relevance and validity in the context of the programme design. For the UBIS programmes, discussions between the academic team in London and the key decision makers, the Dean and Chief Executive Officer, in Geneva resulted in approval of modification to assessment instruments to meet local needs while remaining within the constraints of the articulation agreement with UBIS.

1.23 The review team concludes that through its development of appropriate teaching and learning materials, the College meets its responsibilities as an approved centre for ensuring that academic standards are delivered at a level which meets the expected threshold standard for the qualification. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

1.24 The Programme Handbook outlines the aims and objectives of HNC/HND programmes, their structure, content, teaching, learning, assessment and feedback strategy. The handbook includes details of each unit offered by the College and each unit sets out the required learning outcomes, assessment criteria and content. Where appropriate, Pearson may include advice regarding essential delivery and assessment strategies in a unit specification.

1.25 Learning outcomes for Pearson units are clearly specified and the provision of generic grade descriptors, that must be contextualised to the assessment set, means that the achievement of students can be measured consistently. Programme learning outcomes are articulated in the MBA and BBA handbooks. However, neither handbook includes module specifications.

1.26 The College states that academic staff design assessments to meet the programme requirements and align to the module learning outcomes. A standardised assignment template has been introduced to make clear to students the outcomes being assessed and the criteria against which achievement will be measured. The use of this template, based on practice in the Pearson programmes, has been extended to all provision to provide a consistent approach. The HNC/HND Programme Handbook sets out the requirements for the determination of marks, progression, the accumulation of credit, and the conferment of awards. In addition to internal verification, Pearson undertake annual independent external verification that the modules have been assessed to the appropriate standards. For UBIS awards, assessment is designed and moderated by the College, although UBIS does have oversight and receives an annual report from the College on assessment outcomes. The processes for setting academic standards and academic credit would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.27 The review team considered a variety of documentation including handbooks, assignment briefs and material on the VLE to explore the clarity with which learning outcomes are expressed and the extent to which students are guided to fully understand expectations of them in assessment. Meetings were held with staff and students.

1.28 The College has operational responsibility for ensuring that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes and grading descriptors. This includes responsibility for setting assessments in direct compliance with Pearson requirements. The examples of assignment briefs seen demonstrate that the learning outcomes assessed for each assessment task are clearly set out for students. Students whom the team met during the review were confident about their assessments and said they found assessment briefs and criteria to be clear. The annual monitoring review process provides evidence that this process has also increased transparency and impacted

positively on the quality of feedback to students on assessed work. The dissemination of good practice from one programme area to another is a positive feature. However, the articulation of learning outcomes on the BBA and MBA programmes is not consistent.

1.29 Although there is some lack of consistency in the specification of learning outcomes of BBA and MBA modules and HNC/HND provision, the Expectation is met and the 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**

1.30 The College monitors programmes on an annual basis using an annual monitoring review form. All taught programmes are monitored. The stated purpose of annual monitoring is to ensure that programmes are 'being delivered in such a way as to meet academic and professional aims and objectives to ensure students have the opportunity to develop to the best of their ability'. For Pearson programmes the College is required to ensure that appropriate processes are in place to routinely monitor and periodically review the programme, and to keep under constant review all aspects of standards management, quality assurance and day-to-day delivery of the programme. The ultimate responsibility for the monitoring and review of the HN programmes, including directing providers to take necessary action as appropriate is with Pearson. This is achieved through Centre approval, the external verifier system and through annual management review visits. UBIS requires an annual assessment outcomes report. There is no requirement by UBIS for an external examiner to the BBA and MBA Top-ups, although the College is planning to increase externality by appointing to this role.

1.31 The AMRs seen for the BBA, EDSML and the HNC/D Business use a standard format. They show the range of data considered, raise actions against specific headings and identify good practice to be shared across the College. Students are able to contribute actively to the review of modules and programmes through their representatives or directly through participation in the College Forum. In response to student suggestions, modules are reviewed mid-delivery as well as at the end. Programme committees report to the QAEC. The QAEC receives a range of reports on student feedback, annual programme review, external verification, Examination Committee and comments on these to Academic Board. Pearson undertake a periodic review of one or more programmes of study, typically once every five years, using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other institutions. The processes in place allow the Expectation to be met.

1.32 The review team evaluated the annual quality monitoring reports for a range of programmes and read the external verifier's reports. The team also spoke with staff and students about their contribution to the annual monitoring process.

1.33 Annual quality monitoring reports are fairly comprehensive in their coverage but it is not clear that the structure of the report is able to facilitate trend analysis. Pearson external verifier reports provide thorough feedback with details of individual student performance. They are, overall, very positive and speak of robust assurance of assessment practice and record-keeping. They provide evidence of a responsive staff team. The Pearson Academic Management Review Report of 2014-15 is comprehensive and detailed providing positive feedback on the College's ability to secure academic standards and an outcomes-based approach to academic awards. The quality of evaluation in the annual quality monitoring reports is variable. For example, the EDSML report states 'EDSML progression is low but acceptable' with no further comment or evaluation of causes or proposals on action to improve progression either in the report or in subsequent minutes of the QAEC. Discussions in meetings with staff suggests that this is an issue of documentation rather than a lack of

reflection. A periodic review by Pearson is due in 2015 and has already commenced with a consultation phase.

1.34 The College demonstrates that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the awarding organisation is being maintained. The team concludes that the Expectation is met with low risk.

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



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

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

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

**Findings**

1.35 The extent of external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards differs significantly between Pearson and UBIS provision. Pearson provision is designed to provide a specialist vocational programme, linked to professional body requirements and the NOS where relevant, providing appropriate external independent expertise. On an ongoing basis, regular formal meetings with external verifiers provide opportunities for the College to draw on external expertise. There are no arrangements to draw on external input to support the maintenance of standards for UBIS provision and this is not required by the awarding organisation.

1.36 The principles on which the UBIS provision is designed or the degree of externality in its development is not clear. Modification of BBA and MBA programmes for local delivery does not draw on external expertise. There is no external examiner yet appointed for UBIS provision although the College is in the process of increasing externality for these awards. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.37 A range of documentation provided to the team made clear the extent of external input to Pearson programmes. In order to understand fully the position regarding UBIS programmes and the matter of externality more generally, the review team met the College President and CEO, senior academic and professional support staff, and reviewed collaborative and articulation agreements.

1.38 The Pearson Annual Management Review of 2014-15 undertaken in February 2015 provides comprehensive external oversight, including an audit of student data. The report confirms that Pearson centre approval and recognition requirements are being met and maintained and that a wide range of quality objectives are being met. For example, accuracy of student data, that assessment strategy, processes and management underpins an appropriate assessment and internal verification system and that programme and unit reviews are undertaken by staff and include information gathered through the learner voice and external reporting, to drive annual monitoring and review outcomes managed by committee. No essential actions were identified in the report.

1.39 The College states that it is the remit of Academic Board to consider/review feedback from a variety of external sources and the College has expressed its intention to form an Advisory Body consisting of external members drawn from both academic and industry backgrounds. However, this ambition had not yet been realised at the time of the visit. A recently appointed Director of Career Services is charged with building industry links to support the College's own internship and placement scheme and engagement with employers.

1.40 In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, the College is required to 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 and whether the academic standards of the associated awarding bodies are appropriately set and maintained. The team concludes that due to the processes in place for Pearson provision and steps being taken to increase externality for UBIS programmes the Expectation is met and the 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

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

1.42 All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated levels of risk are low apart from Expectation A2.1 where the level of risk is moderate. In all sections under academic standards the College is also required to adhere to the procedures of its awarding organisations. There is one recommendation in this section which relates to strengthening the clarity and precision of the assessment regulations governing Pearson awards.

1.43 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the awarding organisations at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 The College states that there are processes in place through the committee structure to 'discuss and debate programme provision within the College' and a set of criteria have been developed for the consideration of future partnerships. These can be found in the Quality Assurance Handbook. The College's academic development strategy is led by the Senior Management Group and its primary aim is to develop programmes that can enhance students' employability prospects. To this end, the College's graduate attributes are aligned to the *Subject Benchmark Statement: Business and Management*. In College documents, reference is made to both formal and informal dialogue that advises programme development, with implicit reference to levels of authority for minor or major modification 'within the parameters of the awarding organisation's regulations to make adjustments that will benefit the learning experience. These can be fed into the Programme Committee'. Formal consideration at Programme Committee allows the student voice to be heard and can lead to new development, for example, a proposal for a Public Relations pathway. The College anticipates involving a student as a member of the programme development team. Information and decisions made are referred to the QAEC and Academic Board.

2.2 The College takes advantage of the levels of autonomy it has to create pathways that maximise recruitment and student engagement while playing to the strengths and subject expertise of its academic community. The College has recently reviewed its portfolio and reconsidered the benefits of being a Tier 4 sponsor. While the College has chosen a curriculum from a prescribed range of units, the ability to design teaching materials and determine its own approach to learning and teaching allows the College to stamp its own identity on its programmes. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The team tested the Expectation by considering a range of documentation and meeting with full-time and sessional tutors and with students to discuss approaches to learning and teaching and to understand the particular opportunities and challenges that the staff and students face in their particular setting.

2.4 The academic team spoke eloquently about their strategies for engaging students and making the theoretical and more abstract conceptual frameworks unambiguous by grounding them in real world scenarios through local field trips. The move to a new building with improved educational technology resources has provided additional and improved teaching and learning space for current and future developments. There has also been an expansion of the teaching faculty and support services including a recently appointed Director of Marketing and Admissions. Resource requirements are discussed at the TLDC and Academic Board, who make recommendations to the Senior Management Group on allocation of appropriate funding. The team noted, however, that the development of the planned Advisory Board would inform course development and also help in the identification of suitable locations for internships and field visits. Therefore the team **recommends** that the College strengthen links with employers to support the strategic development of the curriculum and learning opportunities for students (see also Expectation B10).

2.5 Within the parameters operated by the awarding organisations, the College has effective processes to augment the design and development of programmes. This Expectation is therefore met and the 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**

2.6 The main marketing method used by the College is the website and most students make contact with the College through this. The College has a good relationship with agents and many applications come by this route. The College has a policy on the use of agents for recruitment as set out on the Quality Assurance Handbook and an Agreement and Code of Practice which they are expected to comply with. Agents are also supplied with information about the College and a Certificate of Registration.

2.7 Entry criteria are clearly stated on the website and prospectus and initial filtering of applications is done by the Marketing and Admissions Manager which may involve an interview and consideration of prior learning. Both the awarding bodies specify admission requirements, including levels of English Language. The UKVI, for the purposes of Tier 4 visas, are specific in terms of which English language qualifications are acceptable. Potential students are then referred to the Admissions Board which comprises the Registrar, the Associate Dean and the Assistant Dean plus a member of academic staff, on a rolling basis. In the event of a split decision or an appeal, the case is referred to the College President. The process follows the Recruitment and Admissions Policy and Procedures and the minutes of the Admissions Board are recorded.

2.8 The College states that it subscribes to the principles embedded in the Schwartz Report with respect to good practice in admissions. Admissions data is recorded by staff involved in the admissions process and a report made by the programme leaders through their AMRs to the QAEC and on to Academic Board, which informs the annual review of the process. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.9 The review team examined all the documents mentioned above with respect to the admissions process and discussed its effectiveness with the President and CEO, senior and academic staff, professional and support staff and students.

2.10 The College has seen an increase in student numbers from 31 in 2014 to 147 in October 2015 and it is likely to increase further as the block delivery system facilitates more entry points over the academic year. Based on the data return, 79 per cent of students are international and 84 per cent are over 21 years of age.

2.11 The entry criteria for each programme are clearly stated both in the Prospectus and on the College website, including the ability to communicate in English. There has been some concern at the College about entry language levels, for example the University Collaborative Agreement specifies IELTS of 5.5 for the BBA, and this is under review as it may not be high enough to enable student success.

2.12 The College recognises prior learning as referred to in the programme handbooks and has admitted some students from other colleges in the region. Successful students are also able to progress through the levels at the College towards the MBA providing they meet the entry criteria. The students recruited are an international learning community bringing together a diverse range of experiences which enhances learning for all.

2.13 Prospective students receive suitable information before application and if appropriate are interviewed. The College has a robust admissions process in place, which the students feel is appropriate and fair and which is subject to continuous review through both the QAEC and Academic Board as well as annual review through AMRs.

2.14 Overall, the College has appropriate admissions processes in place and students talk positively about their experiences. There is evidence of reviewing the applications and admissions processes and 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**

2.15 The College has recently moved premises in order to enhance the overall teaching and learning experience. Lecture rooms are fitted with interactive white boards and wireless internet access is available throughout the building enabling students to use laptops, netbooks and smartphones to access emails, the VLE and external websites. There is a guide for students on the essential components of getting started on the VLE and also a guide in using the plagiarism-detection software. Students have access to a small learning resource centre on site and can also access public libraries in the area, for example, Canada Water Library.

2.16 The College operates two delivery structures, the block system and the traditional system. The block system is where a module is delivered every month and this operates for Pearson programmes. The BBA and MBA programmes are delivered on the traditional system where modules are delivered concurrently over a longer period.

2.17 Academic staff are appointed following interview and a micro-teaching session. Teaching staff are observed at least once per year and development and support is given where necessary. Lesson observation information is discussed with their line manager during personal development reviews. The College receives feedback on teaching and learning from students at mid and end of module, programme or internship feedback and through student representatives at programme committees. This is also discussed at the QAEC meetings.

2.18 During the programme the College aims to develop employability, research and analytical skills, team-working and presentation skills and academic staff are committed to developing field trips that support the learning objectives of the various modules. There are opportunities for students to undertake three month internships with a London based company, historically Anglo Education Services has been used to arrange these internships. There is a College Internship Health and Safety Policy.

2.19 The College has in place the resources, delivery mechanisms, staffing, and monitoring and review methods which would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.20 The review team examined a range of documents relating to learning and teaching, including the Quality Assurance Handbook, lesson observation documents and minutes of meetings. The team also scrutinised learning and teaching resources available to students on the VLE and spoke to senior staff and academic staff, professional and support staff, and students.

2.21 Teaching staff are appropriately experienced and qualified and students are very positive about their experience, including small class size, helpful staff, links between teaching, learning and the business world, and the usefulness of the VLE.

2.22 The VLE is available to students remotely and contains programme handbooks, module learning outcomes, copies of presentation software slides, assessment briefs,

assessment submission access through anti-plagiarism software, discussion boards and the means of providing students with feedback on their assessment through editing/marking software. Students are finding the recent developments in the VLE very useful, particularly for remote access and assessment submission.

2.23 Students state that they find the learning challenging and it steps up in this respect at every level, increasing the amount of independent learning and scholarly activity as the programme progresses. Students and teaching staff state that the new block delivery system is working effectively and the Pearson external examiner commented that it has improved results and provided more feedback opportunities.

2.24 Field visits are focused on individual modules and often linked to assessment, which lead to very effective and relevant learning taking place that students find valuable. Some students also participate in internships with local businesses, which also support the application of learning.

2.25 The College is able to effectively monitor teaching and learning through lesson observations, and feedback from students through the programme committees, module evaluations and student forums. The review team considers that the strategic and effective integration of field visits, classroom delivery and the use of the VLE to develop students as independent learners is **good practice**.

2.26 Staff at the College conveyed to the review team a strong sense of their commitment to enabling the students to develop as independent learners in their chosen subject, and to enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking related to their potential employment. Therefore the review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met with low risk.

**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**

2.27 The recent move to new premises has improved considerably the learning resources available to students. Computer wireless access is now available throughout the building enabling students to use laptops, netbooks and smartphones to access emails, the VLE and external websites as well as lecture rooms fitted with interactive white boards. Students have access to a small Learning Resource Centre on site and can also access public libraries in the area, for example, Canada Water Library.

2.28 The College has a diverse range of students of different nationalities, educational experiences and backgrounds. The College organises an induction programme and provides a Student Handbook and programme handbooks to provide support to students in their learning and development. The Careers Department is also engaged in providing training in helping students to better understand and appreciate diversity issues within the workplace.

2.29 The Student Support Policy is outlined in the Quality Assurance Handbook and the Tutorial Policy. Students requiring additional support are identified at application and Student Services provide support services to assist students who may have disabilities or who are facing challenging personal situations. They also advise on mitigating circumstances and work with Registry and Admissions if there are issues related to a student's visa. Students are also allocated student advisers who may be a programme leader, subject leader or module tutor. Their role is to help students by providing academic support and guidance during their time at the College.

2.30 Staffing has increased this year in response to increased student numbers; in addition to an increase in sessional teaching staff, there have been recent appointments of a Director of Career Services and a Director of Marketing and Admissions. The VLE makes a wide range of information available to students.

2.31 The College has a diverse population of students but the learning environment and support services that the College has in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.32 The review team examined the Student Support Policy, the Induction Programme, the Student Handbook, programme handbooks, the Quality Assurance Handbook and resources to support learning on the VLE as well as speaking to students, senior and academic staff, and professional and support staff.

2.33 The new site at Canada Water is an improvement on the previous location and resources to support student learning have been greatly improved. Students are particularly complimentary about the increased bandwidth for internet use, the student lounge and garden, the activities and social events and the access to Canada Water public library. The College seeks to use 'London as a learning laboratory' to enrich students' experience, and field visits and internships provide a diverse range of learning experiences for students. Field visits are commented on positively in student feedback and also in discussions with students.

2.34 The student support systems outlined above are working effectively. Students confirmed that any College staff, particularly the Student Welfare Officer, are approachable and supportive and give informal support through an open door policy. In addition to formal academic tutorials, students are able to book a one-to-one tutorial if required.

2.35 Overall, the review team found evidence that there are effective processes to monitor and evaluate resources and support mechanisms which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Expectation B4 is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.36 The College values student feedback on all aspects of the development and operations of the college. Students are elected to represent the collective voice of their programme in discussions with both administrative staff and tutors. The Student Representatives Handbook provides training and written support on their roles and responsibilities. A certificate at the end of a period of office acknowledges their contribution to the College's development, aimed at enhancing the student learning experience and the delivery of the modules/programmes. The programme committees enable student representatives to provide feedback formally and directly to the programme teams on academic matters. A College student forum provides an opportunity for all students to contribute and a range of informal opportunities are available to share their views and raise questions. The open-door policy of staff means that students can have informal access to conversations with any member of staff, including the College President and CEO. Other vehicles for student participation include the feedback questionnaires that contribute to monitoring and review of academic provision. The monitoring and review systems allow the student voice to reach throughout the committee system.

2.37 Collectively, these mechanisms provide students with a wide range of opportunities to engage actively in the assurance and management of academic quality and standards and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.38 In exploring the extent to which students are enabled to contribute, the review team reflected on the student submission, minutes of meetings, feedback contributing to annual monitoring and review processes, and held meetings with representative and other students, and with staff.

2.39 The College's student representatives and non-representative students confirmed that they are perceived as partners in their learning and are encouraged to engage with staff both formally and informally at all levels within the College. They confirmed that these mechanisms are used regularly. Students attending programmes committees receive papers by email in advance. Student representatives reported that meetings were clear and they felt able to contribute.

2.40 An example of where student feedback has led to tangible change is in the case of the BBA (Top-up) programme where concerns were expressed by students about the high number of assessments points in each module. Academic staff had also concluded that there were sound pedagogic reasons for reviewing whether the programme was over assessed and agreed to review the programme assessment loading. This resulted in discussions between the College and UBIS which led to a reduction in the number of assessment points from 4 to 3. The overall learning outcomes remained the same, with appropriate assessment criteria linked to those outcomes. Feedback on matters raised and action taken is returned to students through a variety of means including publication of the annual monitoring report, feedback through the VLE and directly via the Student Welfare Officer.

2.41 The range of measures to encourage active engagement by students, and indications that these measures are having a positive impact, indicates that Expectation B5 is met and 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**

2.42 QAEC has delegated authority from Academic Board for monitoring the effective implementation of all assessment regulations of the College's validating authorities. The Quality Assurance Handbook sets out the principles for assessment, the grading structures for different programmes and the means by which assessment strategy and criteria are communicated to students. These vary according to each awarding organisation. Marking systems, moderation, internal and external verification are dependent on different sets of regulations. While there is reference in the BBA and MBA programme handbooks to 'regulations', they are not included.

2.43 During induction, specialist workshops support students to engage in effective academic practice to avoid the risk of misconduct. Assessments are submitted through plagiarism-detection software and all Student Handbooks contain information about academic malpractice and guidelines on Harvard referencing. Pearson provides detailed guidance on dealing with potential academic misconduct. There is no equivalent for UBIS awards.

2.44 The vast majority of assessment is assignment (individual and group) and presentation modes. Assessment briefs are moderated internally prior to being given to students using a standard template replicated in the Quality Assurance Handbook. For Pearson awards all written assessments are first and second marked. The first marker provides comments through editing/marking software. The second marker reviews the submission and the commentary, completing an internal moderation form found in the Quality Assurance Handbook. Where agreement cannot be reached a third marker reviews the work and draws a conclusion. The Pearson external verifier reviews a sample of assessments. All assessment for the UBIS BBA (Top-up) and the MBA (Top-up) programmes are internally first and second marked. The marks are ratified in the Examination Committee, all details of which are forwarded to UBIS and to Pearson. Student performance is reported to the Examinations Committee under the authority of Academic Board. Grounds for appeal are articulated within the Student Handbook as are the procedures for accreditation of prior learning. Formative feedback is provided both in hard copy and through GradeBook on the VLE.

2.45 Workshop sessions are arranged to review work with students and consider performance across the unit. Actions to meet any gaps in criteria achieved may be organised within the unit. Counselling and academic support is provided and progress is monitored by an academic advisor. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.46 The review team investigated the operation of equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment through programme handbooks, guidance from awarding organisations, information available to students on the VLE and meetings with staff and students.

2.47 Assessment practice is reported by Pearson as robust. External verifiers' reports indicate that the quality and quantity of feedback on assessed work is very good and

constructive. This was also corroborated by feedback from students. The Pearson Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4 to 7 provides a clear framework and guidance on good practice within which the College is expected to operate.

2.48 The College has more recently improved its monitoring and management of academic misconduct. The team **affirms** the work being done to improve and formalise processes for managing and monitoring academic misconduct which is a positive step towards the development and embedding of a more systematic approach. However, the review team was not able to find comprehensive and distinct assessment regulations for Pearson or UBIS provision and some elements are missing from the programme handbooks including a consistent way of dealing with late submission to ensure parity between students.

2.49 The expectation that higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, is met. Students are able to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. The team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.50 The College's Quality Assurance Handbook states that, as the awarding organisation, Pearson provides a system of external verifiers. External verifiers visit the College to review student work and to meet academic and administrative staff, and students on Pearson awards are advised in their handbook that the outcomes of external quality assurance processes are discussed with them in the College's committees and shared on the VLE. The College makes clear that UBIS does not require the use of external examiners and there is no explanation by UBIS, who retain responsibility as the awarding organisation, of mechanisms for external quality assurance of assessment instruments or academic standards achieved. UBIS does require an annual Report of Outcomes Assessment Results, a summary of statistical data on the percentage achievement of learning outcomes.

2.51 For Pearson provision, external verifier reports are received annually to a prescribed template that reflects on actions following the previous visit, the validity of assessment instruments, student support and levels of achievement, and areas of good practice. Detailed comments are provided with summary actions for teaching teams to take forward. External verifier reports are listed as a source of evidence for the annual quality monitoring reports for HNC/HND and EDSML provision. While UBIS does not require external examiners, the College states that it is appropriate, as good practice and within a UK context, to make such an appointment. This approach has been discussed with the Dean of UBIS who is supportive of this action. The processes and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.52 The review team considered a range of documentation when testing this Expectation including Pearson external verifiers' reports and the Pearson Academic Management Report for 2014-15. The team also spoke with staff and students and reviewed materials and information available to students on the VLE.

2.53 Reports produced following visits by external verifiers are considered by the TLDC, QAEC and Academic Board, although minutes are patchy. Student representatives confirmed that the reports are discussed at programme committee meetings and summary feedback is provided at student forum meetings. It is clear from the reports that actions arising from previous minutes are systematically addressed. However, copies of the reports are not available to students on the VLE and therefore the team **recommends** that the College adopt a consistent approach to making external examiner reports available to all students.

2.54 The Pearson procedures and templates support its external verification arrangements. There is supporting documentation and summary information shared with students. This Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.55 The College monitors all taught programmes on an annual basis using an annual monitoring review process that includes evaluation of Pearson external verifier reports, review at unit level and summary statistics on the performance of students. Review at unit level draws on feedback from staff and students, reports from partners where activity has involved external contribution and the evaluation of resources. The annual monitoring review reports are presented to QAEC. As the key internal auditing committee, QAEC is responsible for quality assurance and enhancement at operational, programme and individual module level. It reports to Academic Board which has overall responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of strategy and structures for assuring academic standards and quality. Responsibility for ensuring that the annual monitoring review process is robust and that the outcomes are reported to the awarding organisation is with the Associate Dean.

2.56 Programme committees and student forums facilitate student feedback to the programme teams on the quality of delivered curriculum. The programme committees report directly to the QAEC.

2.57 In the self-evaluation document, which was submitted as part of this review, contains a description of a process of strategic review led by the Senior Management Group in the context of a development plan agreed by Academic Board. While the timing of this review is every three years, in practice the College President advised the team that the Board of Directors would require a strategic response to changes in the educational landscape that impact the College.

2.58 The Annual Management Review Report produced by Pearson provides external quality assurance of the College as an approved Centre and includes detailed commentary on the Centre's quality assurance systems and procedures, their review and development. The report does not comment on the quality of the annual monitoring review reports produced internally, rather it is a review of the operation and implementation of Pearson policy and procedures. The processes in place enable the Expectation to be met.

2.59 The UBIS Faculty Handbook & Guidelines 2013-14 does not include requirements for programme monitoring and review. The BBA Top-up provision was first offered in January 2015 and the College has produced an Annual and Quality Monitoring Report 2014-15 using the same template as for other provision. The processes in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.60 The review team evaluated a range of documents and looked carefully at the way in which the various processes contributed to summary evaluation. The team held meetings with staff and students who reflected on the monitoring and review process, and their contribution to it.

2.61 Annual monitoring reviews are produced to a standard template. Discussion with academic staff confirmed that subject leaders analyse and review a range of data and this is drawn together by the Associate Dean as the annual monitoring review report. Statistical analysis is at programme level and includes trend analysis based on examination committee outcomes. The implementation of the new student management system referred to in

College documents has not yet progressed to the point where a prescribed data set can be generated to inform the annual cycle of programme review. While there is mention in the annual monitoring reviews seen about the impact of changes in the teaching pattern and rolling recruitment, there is no discussion in committee minutes about the impact of this approach on the pattern of monitoring and review. Students and staff did, however, identify opportunities taken to enhance review processes citing as examples the addition of a mid-point unit review proposed by students, the reduction in assessment loading and action taken on lecturer performance.

2.62 Committee minutes provide a brief record of the matters considered and the basis on which decisions are agreed. The summary document Management of Actions does not make clear the origin of the action point and where responsibility lies for reporting on progress. The supporting evidence base for annual monitoring review reports is referenced at a very general level within the narrative of the report. Actions are not drafted to make explicit the intended outcome, stages for implementation or reporting requirements. The quality of annual monitoring review report writing and the record of their deliberation therefore do not reflect the level of reflection that takes place across the provision as a whole. The quality of reporting and the record of deliberation could be developed further to provide a more meaningful and comprehensive picture for staff and student representatives.

2.63 The College's processes for the monitoring and review of Pearson programmes are comprehensive and align to the awarding organisation's expectations. With no specification for annual reporting from UBIS, the College has used its own annual monitoring review process for review of the BBA Top-up after a full year of delivery. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

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



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

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

#### **Findings**

2.64 Distinct procedures for academic appeals and student complaints are documented in the Quality Assurance Handbook. They are subsequently included in the programme handbooks and student handbooks in summarised form. The grounds for appeal are clearly stated along with the steps that students can take. The appeals procedure has two stages. A formal appeal is considered by a committee chaired by the College President. If the College appeal process is exhausted, an appeal can be made to the awarding organisation and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

2.65 For complaints, there are informal stages that encourage the student to take their complaint in the first instance for discussion with staff or their representative. Formally, the student must write to the College President who will investigate the case. Appeals against the President's judgement can be made to a Complaints Panel. Having exhausted all College-based procedures, the student may appeal to the awarding organisation or the OIA.

2.66 The UBIS Faculty Handbook states that students should attempt, initially, to settle grade disputes with their instructor within 30 days of the issuance of the disputed grade. A formal appeal can be made to the Dean's Office if the discussion is not satisfactory. However, the BBA Top-up Programme Handbook makes clear that in the UK disagreement with academic judgement does not constitute grounds for appeal. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.67 The review team considered the effectiveness of the procedures for academic appeals and student complaints through the scrutiny of policies and procedures. However, there was no relevant associated paperwork to evaluate the policy in practice. The team also met staff and students.

2.68 The College states that no formal appeals or complaints had been submitted by students currently studying at the College; in a meeting with students the review team was advised about a complaint that emerged from changes in marks awarded following release of marks pre-moderation. This incident was explained by the College as an administrative error following double marking of student work. Nevertheless, the criteria for determining whether a complaint is informal or formal need greater clarity so that complaints can be recognised and processed accordingly within the approved policy and procedures. Students were clear about where they would seek advice on how to make a complaint or submit an appeal and were content with the manner in which their one significant issue had been managed as an informal complaint.

2.69 The negligible volume of cases of appeals or complaints suggests that the lines of communication between the staff and students are open and transparent. Therefore Expectation B9 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.70 The College has arrangements with agents for the recruitment of students, and employers for field trips and internships which support the delivery of learning outcomes. The College uses agents to recruit some of its students and they go through a formal due diligence process before they are accepted. The information request pack includes copies of the companies' official registration documentation, their business plan, contact details and two business referees. A new agent also receives an Agency Agreement, the Code of Practice from the College and finally a College Certificate of Registration.

2.71 The College regards the programme of field trips as an important part of enriching the students' experience and these are linked to individual modules and often assessments. London is regarded as a 'learning laboratory' and academic staff are committed to developing field trips that support the learning objectives of the modules. Following the field trip, students provide written feedback on its value, and staff complete a report as the basis for discussion at the Programme Committee.

2.72 In the past the College has worked closely with Anglo Educational Services (AES) who arrange internships for students on several of the programmes. AES has a network of contacts with employers in the London area, it is also reviewed by QAA. The College has a Health and Safety Policy for Students on Internships and an Internship Handbook.

2.73 The College is also planning to develop an Advisory Board, a chair has been appointed and two members confirmed. The College is committed to programmes that are geared towards developing real employability skills and the Advisory Board aims to support this commitment.

2.74 The documentation and processes in place to manage recruiting agents, field trips and internships would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.75 The review team examined the documentation relating to the use of agents for recruitment, field trips, internships and plans for the Advisory Board, and talked to senior staff, students, academic staff and professional and support staff.

2.76 The processes mentioned support the College philosophy on employability and the field trips are reported by staff and students to be very successful in facilitating student success in the relevant learning outcomes. Internships have been less successful with only five students currently reported to be participating and no employers were available to meet the team to discuss them. The College Prospectus, Programmes 2015-16 and the College website promote internships but the reality seems to be less obvious and none of the students the review team met had had internships so far. The College is changing the way it manages internships to give it more control of the process and this is likely to lead to a more positive result. The management, documentation and review of internships is very effective and would support this move.

2.77 The development of the Advisory Board would inform course development and also help in the identification of suitable locations for internships and field trips. Therefore the team **recommends** that the College strengthen links with employers to support the strategic development of the curriculum and learning opportunities for students (see Expectation B1).

2.78 Expectation B10 is met but as there is currently a lull in the provision of internships and the planned Advisory Board to support curriculum development, and enhance learning opportunities for students is not yet operational, there is moderate risk due to weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's academic governance.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

**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**

2.79 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

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

2.81 All of the Expectations relating to the College's quality of student learning opportunities are met with low risk apart from Expectation B10, which is met with moderate risk. The review team makes two recommendations in this section that concern strengthening links with employers to support the strategic development of the curriculum and placement opportunities for students and adopting a consistent approach to making external examiner reports available to all students.

2.82 There is one feature of good practice identified in this section relating to the strategic and effective integration of field visits, classroom delivery and use of the VLE to develop fully students as engaged and independent learners. There is one affirmation relating to the work being done to improve and formalise processes for managing and monitoring academic misconduct.

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

### **3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities**

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

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

##### **Findings**

3.1 The College states that it has an information policy which seeks to provide materials that are accurate, fair, relevant and accessible for potential and current students, and partners, agents and awarding bodies. This policy applies to both paper and digital information.

3.2 There are three types of communication with potential students, namely the Prospectus and Programmes 2015-16, the College website and agents' information, which includes academic and visa requirements and information about the College. Some information about the College also appears on the awarding organisation website and the Boutique Universities Consortium website.

3.3 During induction current students receive a slide pack, timetable, the Programme Handbook, the Student Handbook, the Internship Handbook, Guide to using the VLE, as guide to using the plagiarism-detection software and the Student Representatives Handbook. The VLE is a major source of information for both students and staff. Documents that are largely intended for staff use include the Quality Assurance Handbook and the minutes of the College committees. On completion of their programmes students receive both the College and awarding organisation transcripts.

3.4 The College provides a large amount of information for its stakeholders and aims to ensure it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy through collective responsibility by the College staff responsible for each area, for example the Head of Marketing would oversee the website and the admissions team would oversee information provided for Agents. Final sign-off would be by the College President. Some documents also go through the College committee system and are signed off by academic staff. These processes would enable the College to meet this Expectation.

3.5 The review team tested this Expectation through examining the written information produced by the College, information provided on the VLE, information on the College and partner websites, and spoke to the College President and CEO, senior and academic staff, professional and support staff, and students.

3.6 Although the College endeavours to provide information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, there is no systematic process for doing this and there is no formal sign-off procedure. However, the College is well aware of its responsibilities in this area and it is documented in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

3.7 Academic Information Management is expected to be enhanced by the introduction of a school management information system which will improve the College's capabilities as it develops both in terms of programmes and student numbers. The implementation and record maintenance within the new system is the responsibility of the Registrar's Office.

3.8 The Student Handbook, programme handbooks and information provided on the VLE is comprehensive, and students confirm that in their view the information provided in them is accurate and complete. However, not all of the modules on UBIS validated programmes have module learning outcomes and the link between assessment tasks and programme learning outcomes is not always clear. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College further develop the programme and module information, including learning outcomes provided to current students at the start of their programme and throughout their studies.

3.9 The College website is an important source of information for prospective students and contains accurate information about the programmes offered. Partner websites are not always as accurate, however, as they refer to the College as a University.

3.10 The team considers that the College has a clear understanding of the expectations placed upon it with regard to the information it provides, and it endeavours to ensure that prospective students are able to make an informed decision prior to applying. However, the team **recommends** that the College formalise the processes for checking that information about higher education is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.11 The team concludes that Expectation C is met but there is no formal process or sign-off procedure for information provided by each department of the College. The risk is therefore moderate due to weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's academic governance.

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

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

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

3.13 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is moderate. There are two recommendations in this section concerning the College further developing the programme and module information, including learning outcomes provided to current students at the start of their programme and throughout their studies, and formalising the processes for checking that information about higher education is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

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



## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The College does not have a separate enhancement strategy. Rather, the LTDC has an explicit enhancement role and a stated purpose to 'support the development of the learning and teaching function at the College with the overall aim of fostering and disseminating good practice'. As a small institution, the College seeks to capitalise on the cross-fertilisation of ideas and practice across its community as a catalyst for the nurturing of future developments. The College's approach is underpinned by an ethos of continuous improvement and is manifested in the deliberative structures and through staff training workshops and presentations.

4.2 At a strategic level the College seeks to develop and enhance the learning opportunities for students through development of its portfolio and partnership arrangements. Most recently, the College has made the decision to focus recruitment on Europe to maintain diversity in its student profile and to develop its business with other awarding bodies. The College also seeks to extend its network of contacts with London businesses to provide learning opportunities for students through internships and field trips, using London as a learning laboratory to align employability skills and deliver an engaging curriculum. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The review team considered the effectiveness of the approach to enhancement through the scrutiny of documents, policies and relevant reports. The team also met students, academic, professional and support staff.

4.4 Overlapping membership of committees, continuous contact between staff and frequent feedback between staff and students provide a basis for constant reflection and sharing of ideas. It was clear to the review team in discussions with academic staff that there exists an attitude which expects and encourages enhancement of student learning opportunities. Students are also aware of this ethos and describe the staff as particularly receptive to constructive feedback. Annual peer observation of teaching identifies, supports and disseminates good practice. The College has deliberately augmented its full-time staffing complement to form core teaching teams and to support specific initiatives. On this basis, the means are available to the College to identify and act on opportunities for enhancement.

4.5 Examples of activities that the College had initiated include development of the careers function to provide oversight of internships and advice and guidance. This development is supported by a newly appointed full-time member of staff. Additional staff have also been appointed to provide student academic and welfare support services and to train students to engage actively in their role as representatives. The induction programme has been extended so that students are 'better prepared for undertaking perhaps a very different approach to learning and development'.

4.6 Staff and students are able to provide examples of how the strategy of promoting experiential and active learning was being implemented through field trips, addressing real world scenarios and contexts and enriching the learning environment.

4.7 The establishment of an Advisory Board of industry professionals to provide a degree of externality, inform strategic development and expand networks, contacts and internship opportunities has been delayed. So too has the appointment of an external examiner to the UBIS provision.

4.8 Overall, deliberate steps are being taken at College level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The College therefore meets this Expectation and the level of risk is low.

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

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

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

4.10 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice in this section.

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

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The College has been developing employability as an underpinning theme over the past two years and has sought to provide students with some of the skills that will enhance their opportunities for good employment. All of the College's programmes have at their heart the notion of active learning and a curriculum geared towards developing real employability skills. This is set out clearly in the College Philosophy on Employability.

5.2 The College seeks not only to provide students with an academic qualification but to equip them for employment. Theories taught are linked to the real world by examining companies and how external factors affect their business. Research is an important part of all student experience and BBA and MBA students have designated research classes which are linked to employment. Other important skills include analytical skills, team working and presentations, which are all valuable skills needed for successful employment.

5.3 Internships provide students with a three-month placement in a Londo- based company. Internships are to translate theory into practice in a business environment, to enable students to gain knowledge and understanding of business, to gain experience of working in a UK environment, to gain personal confidence, to use team working skills and enhance their CV.

5.4 The College has developed a field trip programme to visit organisations within London, using 'London as a learning laboratory'. These visits are aligned to module outcomes and are often related to assessment.

5.5 Student assessments are related to the skills needed for employment and they are internally verified to ensure that they are work relevant.

5.6 The College has recently appointed a Director of Careers and plans to develop a Careers Department which will also be responsible for the internships. The Careers Department will have one-to-one meetings and workshops with students to help in CV writing, application forms and interview techniques. Students also participate in personal development plan activities within their modules which help them focus on their potential careers.

5.7 The College also aims to provide weekly workshops on CV writing, skills assessments, letter writing, completing application forms, interview techniques and understanding psychometric testing. Students are also encouraged to take part in College activities, for example being student representatives on the Programmes Committee, supporting the student representative system and participating in the Student Association, all of which enable students to gain valuable employment skills.

5.8 Leavers destination data is being collected with a view to developing an alumni network to provide feedback on programme requirements.

## 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](http://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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx)

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

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

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Self-evaluation document**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

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