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

October 2018

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the London College of International Business Studies. The review took place from 9 to 11 October 2018 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Fahmida Khan Rushdy
- Dr Anya Perera.

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

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

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)[2] and explains the method for [Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers).](#)[3] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/higher-education-review.

Key findings

Judgements

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

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

Recommendations

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

By February 2019:

- take steps to ensure that the Academic Board exercises full responsibility for standards, quality and enhancement of academic provision (Expectations A2.1, A3.3, B1)
- establish and implement a definitive process for internal approval of new programmes prior to submission to the validating body (Expectation B1)
- ensure that unsuccessful applicants for admission are made fully aware of their right to appeal against the decision to reject them (Expectation B2).

By July 2019:

- further develop, establish leadership of, and securely implement the strategy for enhancement (Enhancement).

About the provider

The London College of International Business Studies (the College) was formed in 1994, and aims to become a leading international provider of quality higher education and executive training. The College focused initially on delivering further education programmes and short-course provision but went on to develop its capacity to deliver higher education provision and, following a change of ownership in 2016, underwent a period of redevelopment and restructuring in 2017. The College is now owned by Educor, an education provider based in South Africa. The resulting changes have led to the establishment of a partnership with The Open University (the University) as its sole awarding body and to the development and approval of a new range of undergraduate degree programmes leading to awards of the University. These programmes were open to students for the first time in 2018.

At the time of the review, the College offered three programmes leading to the award of a bachelor's degrees. A total of 24 students were enrolled on these programmes, all of whom were studying on a full-time basis. The College employs six academic staff, of whom three are full-time and three are part-time.

The College's most recent engagement with the QAA was a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) in 2016, which resulted in positive outcomes. The five recommendations and the single affirmation arising from that review have largely been superseded by the introduction of entirely new programmes with a new awarding body.

The key challenges currently faced by the College relate to the establishment and implementation of policies and procedures suited to the delivery of its recently-established programmes, and to the development and management of partnerships across the African continent, in particular with study centres in Botswana, Ghana and Uganda intended for remote delivery of its programmes.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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 offers accelerated two-year undergraduate business degrees with a suite of named pathways, whose first intake of students entered in June 2018.

1.2 The College entered a validation partnership with the Open University having taught out its previous provision in 2016. Successful validation by The Open University of its BSc (Hons) Business, BSc (Hons) Business (Marketing) BSc Hons Business (Public relations) and their nested sub degrees took place in November 2016 at an event in which institutional and undergraduate course approval was achieved. The College is an accredited partner institution of the University for a five-year period from 1 April 2017.

1.3 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.4   The team reviewed the University's documentation on validation, its reports from the validation event and responses from the College and the validation panel. The team also met with senior staff, academic staff at the College and with representatives from The Open University.

1.5   The University's handbook for validated awards ensures that programmes meet the University's academic regulations, UK threshold standards and external reference points. The College was one of five independent institutions that participated in a validation pilot study run by the University in conjunction with QAA. This sought to reduce the timescale for validation using concurrent approval, desk-based audit and experts and led to a successful outcome.

1.6   The University's institutional validation event included a desk-based audit and an institutional visit, together with a separate validation event for the BSc (Hons) Business course and its pathways. The College's submitted documentation was scrutinised by a panel with two external subject experts and chaired by an independent appointee and included discussions with the College during a visit. The detailed validation report arising from this event and responses to submissions from the College comment specifically on alignment with the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and programme outcomes; all conditions on approval have since been met by the College. As an accredited partner institute of the University, a further four pathways to the course have been developed by the College and are currently undergoing approval by the University.

1.7   The College follows the University's policies and procedures to ensure alignment of its provision with appropriate external reference points. The Expectation is met and the 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

1.8   The Open University as the College's validating partner is responsible for establishing and setting the academic framework for the awards, including the level and credit value of modules. The University's Handbook for Validated Awards and its Regulations for Validated Awards provide the regulatory structure and guidance for degrees which is tested through the validation approval process.

1.9   Oversight of academic standards and quality at the College is provided by Senate with Academic Board acting as the senior deliberative academic committee. The integrity of academic decision making has been supported through amendments following the College's institutional validation, so strengthening the authority of Academic Board through its terms of reference.

1.10   These arrangements, if securely implemented, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.11   The review team tested the effectiveness of current arrangements at the College by examining internal handbooks, the University's handbook for validation, policies and procedures relating to academic standards and the minutes of institutional and programme committees. The team met with senior staff, academic staff, support staff, students and partnership managers of the University. To test adherence to the College's internal academic governance and procedures, the team explored the effectiveness of internal procedures by which new pathways were developed ahead of being submitted for validation.

1.12   The College adheres to the University's academic frameworks and regulations which has been tested and confirmed at validation. The College has a Quality Handbook for staff which references policies and procedures; a programme handbook is issued to students.

1.13   In meeting the conditions for institutional and award validation, there have been refinements to the committee structure. At the time of the review, the College was in the first few months of operation, corresponding to the early stages of its quality cycle, and the full academic calendar of meetings had not yet been confirmed.

1.14   While the terms of reference of committees shows some delineation between institutional and academic governance, at this stage in the College's development not all committees have yet been convened and there is some lack of clarity in respect of the location of academic authority. The College acknowledged a need for greater formalisation of processes and lines of communication. The review team found that this need applies particularly in respect of oversight of compliance with internal procedures and of the process of programme development and approval: for instance, the Quality Handbook includes two differing descriptions of the process of programme development and approval.

1.15   The College's Academic Board and its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee have not yet met. The terms of reference of the Academic Board show that it is ultimately responsible for standards and quality of the College's provision, and those of the

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee state that it has responsibility for the College's quality assurance framework; nevertheless, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee does not report to the Academic Board, suggesting that there may be potential for lines of communication which conflict.

1.16   The College is currently developing links with study centres in Botswana, Ghana and Uganda, having deferred the start of its UK courses and operation to accommodate the aim of enabling distance learning by students at these centres. To progress this, monthly meetings of the Senior Steering Group, attended by senior academic staff, allow the necessary commercial and business discussions to take place. The increased frequency of meetings of this committee in comparison to that of the College's academic deliberative committees, which have yet to be scheduled, may pose a risk. The lack of oversight of these developments at Academic Board is suggestive of a risk that the College's business developments might not be informed by discussion and evaluation of academic aspects of these planned partnerships.

1.17   The team found evidence of internal discussions at programme level regarding the development of new pathways, but as the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, Academic Board and Senate have yet to meet, the development of these pathways did not adhere to the College's own procedures for course development. The College acknowledged that development of programmes takes place informally.

1.18   In considering how the College would reflect on and evaluate the experience of running its current programmes in the light of data on student retention and progression, the review team heard from staff that this would take place within the College's Programme Committee and would be reported to the Senior Steering Group. However, its terms of reference show that the Programme Committee is a subcommittee of, and reports to, Academic Board. This confusion in lines of communication suggests that the role of Academic Board is not securely embedded in the College's practices.

1.19   The examples of weaknesses in the structure and effectiveness of governance detailed in the preceding paragraphs indicate that the College's Academic Board is not yet playing a role consistent with its stated responsibilities. The review team recommends that the College takes steps to ensure that the Academic Board exercises full responsibility for standards, quality and enhancement of academic provision.

1.20   In line with the requirements of the University, the College has in place documented procedures and committees that, if fully implemented, would serve to maintain internal academic authority. The review team recognises that the College is at the initial stages of operation, and that ad hoc and informal meetings have taken place where course development and student performance have been discussed. Nevertheless the College has not yet securely implemented its arrangements for governance. It has acknowledged that, as its student body grows in size and as the scope of its operations is extended, it is essential that deliberation should be formalised in line with its governance structure. There are weaknesses in the operation of the governance structure arising from the absence of scheduled deliberative committee meetings, the lack of adherence to lines of reporting set out in its structures and the weaknesses in the work of Academic Board. The Expectation is not met and the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not 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

1.21   Programme specifications and module outlines form the definitive documents for the College's provision and have been scrutinised and approved as part of the University validation process using standardised templates. The responsibility for writing these documents is devolved to the College, being governed by the University framework and regulations for validated awards. The College holds definitive records of all programmes with improvements to programme specifications and handbooks reviewed and approved by the University.

1.22   The effective operation of these processes and procedures would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.23   The review team tested the Expectation by considering the guidance provided by the University and its appointed validation panel, responses from the College, the approved programme handbook and module specifications and through discussions with staff and University staff.

1.24   The University's regulations for validated awards require learning outcomes in the programme specification to align with module descriptors with the credits for each module detailed in the programme specification. As the programme has only recently started, the College has yet to hold an Awards Board, but detailed University guidance is provided on the appointment, membership and authority of this Board. In accordance with its partner obligations, the College will need to provide transcripts for all completing and progressing students on an annual basis.

1.25   There is clear guidance from the University through its handbook which forms part of the contractual agreement with the College. Through the process of designing and submitting the award and its newest pathways for validation, the College and its staff are aware of their responsibilities in producing and using these documents as reference points. Changes are subject to the University's course variation procedures.

1.26   The College's responsibilities for producing and maintaining definitive records are well understood, with oversight exercised by the Head of Quality and Enhancement who liaises with the University. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.27   The College designs its own programmes which are validated by The Open University (University). The College has been approved to offer BSc Business, BSc Business (Marketing) and BSc and Business (Public Relations) programmes effective from April 2017.

1.28   The process for programme approval is set out in the University's handbook for validated awards which requires the College to ensure that programme specifications are written with reference to external points such as the Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ.

1.29   The College's Quality Handbook provides a guiding frame of reference for new programme development and approval. The Academic Board has oversight of Programme Planning and Design process and reports to the Senate which has oversight of academic standards and quality.

1.30   While there are weaknesses, as described in Expectation B1, in the College's own arrangements for oversight of the process of programme approval, the University's arrangements for oversight of academic standards through programme approval processes would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

1.31   All programme module specifications are completed on a standard template, provided by the University. Any modifications to either the programme or an individual module will be discussed via the committee structure mainly within the programme committee and the Academic board.

1.32   The team found evidence that discussion regarding programme design has taken place primarily at programme committees prior to submission for approval. The College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, Academic Board and Senate have yet to meet at this initial stage of operation. There has been no formal input by students into programme planning and design.

1.33   Any proposed modifications are sent to the University using the relevant forms as outlined in the University Handbook for validated awards. All courses have been approved by the University for a period of five years starting from April 2017. More recently, the College has developed four new programme pathways which have been approved in November 2017, subject to conditions.

1.34   The College works closely with the University to ensure that academic standards meet the UK threshold standards, enabling programme design and approval process to be in accordance with appropriate academic frameworks and regulations. 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

1.35   The regulations for validated awards are elaborated in the University's Handbook for validated awards. The college has adopted the University's approach to effective assessment, enabling students to achieve module aims and learning outcomes.

1.36   The University's Handbook for Validated Awards commits the College to ensuring that all methods of assessment are effective in measuring student attainment of the intended learning outcomes and that assessment policy and practices are effective in monitoring the validity, equity and reliability of assessment. The College fulfils this through its policies and procedures for the design, approval and review of assessment strategies which are primarily addressed in the Quality Handbook and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

1.37   These arrangements would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

1.38   The Quality Handbook provides guidance and protocols relating to such as design of assessment tasks and their alignment to programme and module learning outcomes, range and volume of assessment and grading criteria against which each assessment will be marked. The Head of Assessment and Performance Evaluation is responsible for oversight of all assessment activity and works with the Dean, Faculty staff and Quality Manager to design assessments for all qualifications.

1.39   The Moderation and Standardisation Policy sets out the College's assessment principles, which ensures fair and justifiable student outcomes of assessment. Assessment decisions are made at formal exam boards. As the college is in the initial phase of assessments, only an initial Module Board has met to consider preliminary results of two modules completed to date. This has been attended by OU staff and the external examiner. Subsequent module boards have been scheduled to take place at the completion of each Block delivery. The final exam board has been scheduled for February 2019.

1.40   The College has secure arrangements to ensure that the achievement of relevant learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment. 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

1.41   The College has measures in place to undertake annual programme monitoring and review in accordance with the University's quality assurance and enhancement framework. The University monitors and review academic standards, measuring student achievement against UK and international reference points, using qualitative and quantitative management to support these activities.

1.42   The process for annual monitoring enables the College to reflect on issues arising from programme reports and evaluate its quality assurance and enhancement arrangements. The College is required to submit an institutional report detailing the annual monitoring process, and a written statement confirming that the programmes have been taught, managed and operated in accordance with the procedures agreed at validation. The College intends to undertake a six-month review of its operation in December 2018 and the first cycle of annual monitoring is due to take place in July 2019.

1.43   The programmes are validated for an initial period of five years from April 2017, and institutional review of the College by the University will take place every five years or at the discretion of the University.

1.44   These arrangements would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

1.45   The review team recognises that, the College being at an early stage of operation, not all of its deliberative committees have yet met and that discussion regarding arrangements for quality assurance, including for programme monitoring and review, have taken place informally within team meetings. This weakness in the operation of the College's governance structure supports the recommendation identified in Expectation A2.1 in relation to the need for Academic Board to fulfil its responsibilities.

1.46   Although the initial annual monitoring cycle has not yet taken place, the College has taken steps to establish secure processes for monitoring and review of programmes and to ensure that the academic standards required by the University will be maintained. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.47   The College's Quality Handbook provides a guiding frame of reference for new programme development and approval. Institutional approval, institutional review, validation and revalidation processes are based on the principle of peer review which is delivered through a panel of suitably qualified and experienced individuals. Peer review provides advice on alignment with UK threshold standards, the Quality Code and other external benchmarks. The University uses external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards.

1.48   These arrangements would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

1.49   The alignment of the College's provision with UK threshold standards and with the standards of the University has been informed by the contribution of independent external expertise to the University's validation process. Additionally, the College has constituted an Advisory Board with independent external membership which, although it has not yet to offer advice on programme design, has a brief to advise the College on matters including the needs of the labour market and programme requirements to meet those needs.

1.50   Teaching staff expressed commitment to using external measures and contexts of practice development including the Higher Education Academy Associate Fellowship process and engagement with communities of practice.

1.51   The College has an ongoing commitment to engage external and independent expertise for setting and maintaining standards. The University's processes for approval of its programmes ensure sufficient independent external input to the maintenance of standards. 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

1.52   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met with a low level of risk except for Expectation A2.1 which is not met with a moderate level of risk.

1.53   The single recommendation in this judgement area arises from the need to ensure that the College's Academic Board exercises full responsibility for standards, quality and enhancement of academic provision.

1.54   There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

1.55   The College has secure frameworks to ensure that standards are maintained at appropriate levels and that the definitive record of each programme is used to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications.

1.56   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations at the provider **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 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, aligned to the College's Strategic Plan, provides a framework and direction for academic staff in the development of programmes and modules. The College designs its own programmes which are validated by the University, and have been approved to offer BSc Business, BSc Business (Marketing) and BSc and Business (Public Relations) programmes effective from April 2017. The College has developed four new programme pathways which have been approved by the University in November 2017 subject to conditions. The College's process for programme approval is detailed in its Quality Handbook which contains two different descriptions of the process. While the oversight provided by the University's approval process, as described at Expectation A3.1, is sufficient to ensure that academic standards are secured, the conflicting evidence of the nature of the College's programme approval process means that the Expectation is not met.

2.2   The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

2.3   The review team heard that the College strives to ensure that student views are incorporated through the programme to the design and development of new programmes. Although the College affirmed that it aims to incorporate student input into future programme design and approval process, there has yet been no formal input by students into programme planning and design into any of the current programme pathways.

2.4   The review team found conflicting evidence of the nature of the process for programme approval and design. While the College affirmed that programme specifications are presented for approval by Academic Board and the Senate prior to approval by the University, this conflicts with the process outlined in the Quality Handbook which itself contains two differing descriptions of the process, and with the arrangements for oversight by Academic Board described by staff. Although the team noted that discussion regarding programme design and approval had taken place at Programme Committees prior to submission to the University, no such discussion had taken place at the Academic Board. Neither the College 's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, nor Academic Board or Senate have yet met to discuss new programme approvals as indicated by the College's internal processes. As noted in recommendation A2.1, weaknesses in the current governance arrangements would impact the process of programme design and approval. The team recommends that the College establish and implement a definitive process for internal approval of new programmes prior to submission to the validating body.

2.5   The College's internal procedures for programme design and approval are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied. The absence of scheduled deliberative committee meetings poses a risk to the oversight of

the programme design, planning and approval process. The Expectation is not met and the level of risk is moderate.

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

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

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

Findings

2.6   The College has devolved responsibility from its awarding body for all recruitment activities. The College's Admissions Policy, available through the website, outlines its procedure and aims and an admission checklist is used internally and kept on file. Each applicant is required to complete an application form, which is assessed along with their qualifications, work history, and other relevant documentation. Students who are shortlisted are invited to attend an interview with at least two members of senor staff with final admission decisions being the responsibility of the Dean or Programme Lead. The Admissions Board has oversight of unconditional and conditional admissions with outcome letters produced by the admissions team. The College makes use of the services of recruitment agents, who are engaged under the terms of a standard contract.

2.7   These policies and procedures, if securely implemented, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.8   The review team considered documentation including the College's Admissions Policy, the internal Admissions checklist, minutes of the Admissions Board and the Quality Handbook. It met senior staff responsible for admissions, teaching staff, other staff involved in the induction process, and students who had recently joined the College and had completed the first three blocks of study

2.9   The College affirms its commitment to widening participation and to seeking to provide equality of opportunity to all its students and applicants. The College has a suitable process for identifying and responding to students with particular needs.

2.10   Consistency is maintained by key academic staff making admission decisions in conjunction with the admission team. The review team heard that in-house training had been provided for the admissions team, for example with joint training on using UK-NARIC for personnel in the UK and Africa.

2.11   The College's admissions policy affirms that unsuccessful applicants for admission have a right to appeal against the decision to reject their application and that the College will on request provide feedback with the reasons for the rejection. However, the letter which is sent to rejected applicants states that the College does not consider appeals and does not provide feedback to individual applicants. The review team recommends that the College should ensure that unsuccessful applicants for admission are made fully aware of their right to appeal against the decision to reject them.

2.12   The induction programme is planned to provide a general welcome and orientation to the College and its support systems integrating academic advice, wellness and life coaching and out-of-hours support. The programme provides an explanation of the block delivery arrangements, and an introduction to the virtual learning environment (VLE). Students are contacted by their academic advisor at the start and end of the module to facilitate proactive academic support and a reflective advisory session. The College has

conducted a survey of current students to monitor satisfaction with the application, information and induction procedures, although its outcomes have not yet been considered.

2.13   The main source of information for applicants is through the website, prospectus or via recruitment agents. Applicants can apply directly via the website portal or request a hard copy of the application form. Students confirmed that the College follows its admissions process and expressed the view that they had received accurate information on the course and its delivery, and that they would know where to access additional help if required and how to gain access to student services.

2.14   The College has an Accreditation for Prior Learning Policy to assess applications from candidates from a non-traditional route, who may not meet the entry requirements but who have sufficient work experience or prior learning to support their application. To date this procedure has not been used to award credit on admission.

2.15   The College operates a fair admissions procedure that aligns with its ethos of being inclusive. It recognises the importance of allowing lead-in time for recruitment of high-calibre students and has trialled the use of diagnostic testing. These support measures are designed to ensure that all students are able to complete their studies. The Expectation is met and the 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

2.16   The College articulates its aims through its Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy and seeks to measure the success of its strategy through academic development, social capital and employability. The monitoring of this will be supported by student performance data and feedback. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment committee, a subcommittee of Academic Board, holds responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and assessment quality and is chaired by the Dean. Membership of this committee is drawn from across the academic, quality and support areas of the College. Formal monitoring of progression and retention data occurs through the annual monitoring process.

2.17   The College arranges its teaching to appeal to mature students, delivering a single module within a five-week block, with three hours of class contact on three days each week.

2.18   This strategy, with its associated approaches and procedures would, if securely implemented, allow this Expectation to be met

2.19   The review team scrutinised relevant policies and procedures and held meetings with a wide range of staff based in the UK and in South Africa. The team met students to discuss their experiences and were given access to the VLE to review its use to support learning and teaching.

2.20   Academic staff are encouraged to gain teaching qualifications and are supported to achieve fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and use their business and commercial experience to develop live business learning materials and case studies. Staff development is incorporated into the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy's implementation plan with in-house workshops team teaching dissemination of staff development and technology user enhancement training. The Learning and Teaching strategy is made available to all staff and its underpinning values and aims are included in the Quality Handbook for staff; the Dean has responsibility for the strategy's implementation. Peer observation of teaching and staff performance reviews form part of the implementation plan for 2018 and the processes for these have been agreed but have yet to commence. The monthly Senior Steering Group chaired by the Chief Executive Officer is attended by the Head of Quality and Enhancement and by the Dean; its minutes show the importance of individual staff goals supporting the College's goals with staff performance reviews seen as a means of achieving this. In the interim, updates on progress are provided by direct reports to the CEO.

2.21   The College aims to provide inclusive learning, facilitated by course design, delivery and student support. The team heard from students that the induction was effective and diagnostic testing has been used to assess their needs. Additional English support is now offered, and support in numeracy and IT skills is also available. The College, through the Registrar, intends to use student feedback on the induction process and to collate information on diagnostic testing in order to inform the development of support arrangements.

2.22 The review team heard from staff that the College recognises the impact on students of the intensity of the block teaching system, and that while it resonates with the business working environment, the main barriers to success are IT literacy, English and welfare support. A primary objective is to offer students support with this model of delivery and with the College's blended learning approach. Students confirmed that they had made contact with their academic advisor based in South Africa, and all the students whom the team met had accessed the 360° Student Support systems.

2.23 In addition to its current support systems, and in response to the identified need for additional English support, the College affirmed that it intends shortly to appoint a member of staff qualified in the teaching of English as a foreign language.

2.24 Although the formal processes to review learning and assessment opportunities and teaching practices are yet to be implemented, these systems are in place and will be used to inform annual monitoring. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.25   The College aims to provide inclusive transformative learning that broadens access to higher education and promotes education opportunities both locally and internationally. Its 360° Student Support Unit, based in South Africa, aims to provide ongoing advice, support and life/wellness coaching, augmented by on-site student support. The College uses student attendance, engagement with the VLE e-mail and phone calls to monitor student progress.

2.26   To realise its vision, the College aims to provide exceptional student support by using technology as a delivery platform across the UK and its other study centres. Students are provided with an academic adviser based in South Africa who proactively contacts them at the start and end of each module. Student have on-site dedicated student support and can access English, IT and numeracy assistance to reinforce their learning and to benefit from the College's block delivery and its blended learning approach. The College has invested in cloud technology in each classroom allowing lectures to be recorded and shared with its study centres. This model is intended to maintain face-to-face contact between student and tutor. The technology has been tested and trialled including the delivery of personal development planning using team teaching with staff based in London and South Africa. The College's advisory board aims to meet annually to facilitate currency in content via its education and industry membership.

2.27   The College's approach to enabling student development and achievement would, if securely implemented, allow this Expectation to be met.

2.28   The review team scrutinised strategy documents, policy and procedures relating to students' academic, personal and professional development and held meetings with staff based both in the UK and in Africa. The team met senior staff, academic staff, students enrolled on the courses in the UK and were able to meet a range of professional support staff.

2.29   Each student is contacted at the start and end of each block by the academic advisor and is invited to have a weekly live chat through the VLE. Academic staff and professional support staff are in regular contact with the 360° support teams, recording communications and notes through a central platform. Individual student engagement with the VLE and attendance is monitored to track and assess engagement, with three absences currently triggering intervention. Academic advisors are familiar with module content and assessments through the VLE and are able to provide support with assignments. Students confirmed that feedback on assessment took place within the delivery of the module concerned and expressed the view that feedback was helpful in enabling and supporting their learning. Students also expressed satisfaction with the VLE, the library and IT resources.

2.30   The arrangements are designed to provide an integrated support network which students confirmed that they had all accessed. The service extends to life coaching and aspects such as budgeting and conflict resolution; students can access support for examinations outside working hours, but none of the students whom the review team met had done so. The intensity of the block delivery is recognised by staff and by students to be demanding and the team heard that staff recognise the importance of attendance to student

success within this delivery pattern. While staff of the College acknowledged the need to further develop recruitment, information and guidance offered prior to enrolment in respect of the commitment to learning required on the part of students for the block delivery system, they recognised that students' success depends on them accessing the available support. This support is both proactive and reactive in nature with records kept of all interventions; through communication between academic and support staff, students who are deemed to be at risk are flagged. The students confirmed that they had taken English and numeracy aptitude tests prior to the start of the course although the College has yet to formalise diagnostic testing. In response to this, students whose first language is not English are receiving additional support through tutors and academic advisers, with additional IT literacy available as required.

2.31   The course provides a customised Personal Development Plan (PDP) 'pathway' whereby students firstly focus on personal development planning (PDP Personal) with subsequent orientation towards PDP Professional and focusing upon PDP Employability in the final year of study. Graduate skills and abilities are articulated through the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy and in the programme handbooks. Although the College's focus on developing a global blended classroom and fostering global citizenship encompasses its ambitions to have simultaneous delivery in study centres in the African continent, as all students are currently in their first year of study and based in the UK, the delivery of PDP Personal draws on UK-based staff and staff expertise of personnel in South Africa. The initial delivery of this module has resulted in a pass rate of 17 per cent; the College is taking steps to increase the pass rate by increasing rates of attendance.

2.32   The College offers a comprehensive level of personalised support to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, and a full review of its effectiveness, in terms of student achievement, retention and progression has yet to be completed. This will occur through its annual monitoring processes and those required by the University. The College has a strong ethos of academic support and pastoral care which is being used to support its current cohort of students. The Expectation is met and the 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

2.33   The College has redeveloped their quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that students have a voice in their own learning, in the study environment and in their ability to offer feedback and opinions to enhance the College, its policies, procedures and resources.

2.34   Students have several mechanisms at different occasions to provide feedback and suggestions, including module feedback, committee representation, student representatives, surveys and tutorials. Prospective students are asked to provide their feedback on the application process. Students complete an induction questionnaire, module review feedback forms and programme review forms. As the College has only recently gained course designation status, the students will be invited to part take in the National Student Survey (NSS) in the following academic year.

2.35   The nomination process for selecting a student representative takes place during induction and is described in the Student Handbook. The College has appointed their first student representatives from the first cohort of students who commenced in June 2018. The College has affirmed that it is planning to provide training for student representatives to be held later in the year with a view to induct them into the student representation process and to outline the terms of the various committees.

2.36   These arrangements would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

2.37   As the College is in the initial phase of its quality cycle, students have not yet participated in any formal meetings. However the College's plans for student engagement will enable students to take part in the College's quality assurance processes and to influence and contribute to review and planning of the College's provision through the internal committee structure, when fully operational. The College affirmed that it intends to have its Student-Staff Consultative committee in November 2018. The review team heard from staff that the College intends to invite students to take part in the annual review process to gather feedback on how the College moves forward and further develops and enhances.

2.38   Students confirmed that student representatives have been appointed and have undergone training for their role. While the intensity of the block delivery model acts against students having time to make contact with staff, students confirmed that staff are responsive to student views, particularly in Student Services and Student Support.

2.39   The regular interaction between staff and students is helping to facilitate a dialogue about the quality of student learning opportunities which is valued by students. The College is taking steps to engage students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The Expectation is met and the 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

2.40   The University's handbook for validated awards details the assessment regulations for validated awards. The College has adopted the University's approach to effective assessment, enabling students to achieve module aims and learning outcomes. The College affirmed its commitment to ensuring that all methods of assessment are effective in measuring student attainment of the intended learning outcomes and that assessment policy and practices are effective in monitoring the validity, equity and reliability of assessment.

2.41   The policies and procedures for the design, approval and review of assessment strategies are primarily addressed in the Quality Handbook and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The College's Accreditation for Prior Learning policy outlines the process for the award of credit based on previous study or prior experiential learning in line with the University regulations.

2.42   The Quality Handbook provides guidance and protocols relating to design of assessment tasks and their alignment to programme and module learning outcomes, range and volume of assessment and grading criteria against which each assessment will be marked.

2.43   These arrangements would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

2.44   The College is establishing the London-based Department of Assessment and Performance Evaluation (DAPE) which will manage the assessment process through face to face-blended delivery mode to students based at its proposed study centres. The Head of DAPE is responsible for oversight of all assessment activity and works with the Dean, Faculty staff and Quality Manager as required in designing assessments to ensure that they are meeting academic standards. The Head of DAPE liaises with 360° Student Support Unit to ensure communication of all relevant academic and pastoral feedback. Guidance on the nature and timing of student feedback is provided in the Quality Handbook and the developmental role and use of student feedback within the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

2.45   Principles, procedures and processes of assessment are available to students through each module specification and on the VLE. Students confirmed that feedback on assessed work is prompt and helpful in supporting their learning.

2.46   The Moderation and Standardisation Policy and the Quality Handbook set out the College's assessment procedures and practices for feedback on assessment, marking, internal and external moderation, second marking, resits and repeats.

2.47   Assessment decisions are made at formal examination boards. As the College is in the initial phase of assessments, only an initial Module Board has met to consider preliminary results of the two modules completed to date. This has been attended by University staff and the external examiner. Subsequent module boards have been scheduled to take place at the completion of each Block delivery, while a meeting of the final Board of Examiners has been scheduled for February 2019.

2.48   The College has implemented measure against the possibility of plagiarism through use of plagiarism-detection software via the VLE. Students receive referencing guidance within teaching sessions and within the Student Handbook as an integral part of developing good academic practice.

2.49   The College has policies governing academic misconduct, mitigating circumstances and recognition of prior learning. Although these policies have not yet been tested in practice, the review team formed the view that they appear likely to be suitable in maintaining the quality and security of the College's assessment processes.

2.50   The College operates valid and reliable assessment processes to ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of credit or qualification. The Expectation is met and the 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

2.51   The University defines the role of its external examiners and is responsible for appointing them. The College's processes and procedures for nomination and appointment of external examiners for taught programmes, and information about the role of external examiners in the assessment process, are elaborated in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

2.52   These arrangements would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, and with representatives from the University.

2.53   The University receives nominations for approval and monitors tenure of external examiners. Appointments are made and monitored centrally by the University in collaboration with the College. Newly-appointed examiners are formally briefed by the Dean with regard to the College's programmes, the nature and form of the block system of study and delivery and the external examiner role within this delivery mode. On appointment each external examiner is provided with programme and student handbooks and the Quality Assurance Handbook and access to the VLE.

2.54   The external examiner has attended the first meeting of the College's Module Board. As the Board of Examiners has not yet met, the College has not yet received an external examiner's report. The College affirmed that it intends to make external examiners' reports available to students and to present the reports at course committees for discussion between the course team and student representatives. The review team heard from staff that external examiner's reports and feedback will be incorporated to the College's annual quality assurance report to the Academic Board to identify any common themes and facilitate sharing of best practice.

2.55   The College has suitable processes in place to make scrupulous use of external examiner reports. The Expectation is met and the 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

2.56   The College has procedures in place to undertake annual programme monitoring and review in accordance with the University's quality assurance and enhancement framework. The University monitors and review academic standards, measuring student achievement against UK and international reference points, using qualitative and quantitative management to support these activities.

2.57   The process for annual monitoring enables the College to reflect on issues arising from programme reports and evaluate its quality assurance and enhancement arrangements. The programmes are validated for an initial period of five years from April 2017. Institutional review will take place once in five years or at the discretion of the University.

2.58   The College is required to submit an institutional report detailing the annual monitoring process, and a written statement confirming that the programmes have been taught, managed and operated in accordance with the procedures agreed at validation. The annual monitoring report template is used for both reflections on the previous year's activities as well as action planning for the year ahead.

2.59   These arrangements would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

2.60   The College has an annual review schedule for the purposes of monitoring, reviewing and adapting the programmes and modules. This review will be conducted internally in the first instance through the programme and quality committees.
Any modifications or changes to the programmes resulting from the review will require sign off from the Academic Board, when committees become fully operational. Proposals for modification may come from a number of sources including the Advisory Board, external examiners, academic staff, or the University, or may arise from changes in regulation or feedback from students.

2.61   Annual reports will be submitted to the Academic Registrar to identifies areas for action and will be available to the Programme Leader, Module Leader and Dean for response. All reports and integral key issues and responses will be considered at the sub-committees of the Academic Board.

2.62   The review team recognises that, the College being at an early stage of operation, not all of its deliberative committees have yet met and that discussion regarding arrangements for programme monitoring and review have taken place informally within team meetings. Nevertheless, there are systematic processes in place for monitoring and review of programmes to ensure that academic standards are maintained and quality of learning opportunities is enhanced, and staff of the College demonstrated awareness of the College's procedures and of their role within them. The College intends to carry out a six-month review in December 2018 and the first cycle of annual monitoring is due to take place in July 2019. The Expectation is met and the 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

2.63   The College has formal procedures for handling appeals and complaints, which follow the general principles of openness, transparency and equity. The College encourages students to raise issues informally before pursuing the formal route. Information relating to appeals and complaints is available on the College website and within the student handbook and programme handbook. Students are also informed of this policy during their induction.

2.64   Students obtain advice and guidance on the process of complaints and appeals through the College's 360° student support academic advice centre, the registry, student services or faculty staff. The University has overall responsibility for dealing with academic appeals.

2.65   These arrangements would, if implemented securely, enable the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised relevant specifications, validation documents, handbooks, awarding body guidelines, policies, and procedures and held discussions in meetings with senior, academic and professional staff, with representatives from the University, and with students.

2.66   Although the College has not yet received any complaints or appeals, it has secure processes for handling them. In addition to the formal complaints and appeals procedures, student can raise issues with staff informally or they can speak to their academic advisor, to allow issues to be resolved informally in the first instance. While students were not aware of the formal procedures, they expressed awareness of how to find assistance to resolve any potential issues. Although the Academic Board has not yet met, the College affirmed that a summary of complaints and appeals will be available for annual consideration by the Board.

2.67   A student who has exhausted the College's complaints or appeals procedure has recourse to the University's process for complaints or appeals. The College subscribes to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

2.68   The College understands the extent of its responsibilities and operates fair and accessible procedures to handle appeals and complaints. The Expectation is met and the 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

2.69   Educor, as the owner of the College, seeks to establish quality private education in Africa and to this end has established study centres as partners to the London campus in Botswana and Ghana. Although these study centres are not yet enrolling students, the College intends in due course that students based at them will be able to follow the College's programmes of study and gain the associated qualification.

2.70   The College has invested in cloud technology to operate these African sites with lectures streamed from the College in London. This supports the College vision of becoming a leading international provider of quality higher education and establishing a global classroom using technology as a delivery platform for study across the UK and Africa. Within the proposed international expansion of teaching, a blended learning approach is being planned that places the College in London as the central venue for delivery, linked to study centres initially in Botswana and Uganda, and with later expansion to centres in Uganda and Tanzania.

2.71   The College acknowledges its obligation to ensure secure arrangements for delivering learning opportunities at the study centres, and acknowledges that it requires approval from the University before programme delivery there can begin. At the time of the review visit, the College was working towards completion of the University's conditions on approval. These arrangements would be sufficient to enable the Expectation to be met.

2.72   The review team tested this Expectation by examining reports from the validating partner, meetings with the CEO, senior staff of the College, the Operations Manager in Africa and meeting with representatives from the College's validating partner.

2.73   The review team heard that IT infrastructure is in place and is being tested to ensure that the systems are robust and operational with effectiveness being monitored remotely through the office in South Africa. Staffing is in place for sites in Africa and cloud technology is being used to trial blended learning. The team found a consistent understanding of meeting pre-requisite conditions at all levels of the institution prior to the start of delivery at the satellite sites.

2.74   The review team recognises the role of the African satellite sites in fulfilling the College's strategic ambitions and its actions to help provide parity of learning opportunities through a digital platform with in country staff appointments to facilitate future delivery. The College is progressing its work towards meeting the conditions in full, in anticipation of future delivery at these centres, with oversight from its validating partner. The College is cognisant of its obligations to gain approval and therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.75   The College does not offer research degrees.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.76   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met with a low level of risk except for Expectation B1, which is not met with a moderate level of risk.

2.77   There are two recommendations in this judgement area. The first relates to the need to establish and implement a definitive process for internal approval of new programmes. The second arises from the need to ensure that unsuccessful applicants for admission to the College's programmes are made aware of their right to appeal against the decision to reject their application.

2.78   There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

2.79   The College has secure frameworks to maintain the quality of student learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **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 vision and mission of the College are published in its strategic plan and on its website. The College has an information policy with oversight by a member of its steering group and its awarding body. The College regards the website as the main externally-facing channel of communication; an internal four-stage process with ownership at each stage is intended to ensure accuracy. Responsibility for social media rests with the Marketing Manager based in South Africa. There is a control sheet for all public-facing information detailing the platform through which it will be delivered, requiring approval from a member of the steering committee; the full policy is also published in the Quality Handbook.

3.2   Public information was approved through the University's validation procedures ahead of the College's first year of operation. To ensure accuracy of all publicly available information, the prospectus is subject to annual approval by the University which also conducts an annual audit of the College's website. Students have access to programme, module information, policies and procedures through the student and programme handbooks.

3.3   The arrangements for ensuring the accuracy of information, if securely implemented, enable the College to meet this Expectation.

3.4   The team examined the website and prospectus and tested the understanding of the College's responsibilities through meetings with senior staff responsible for information and in a meeting with representatives from the College's validating partner.

3.5   A nominated member of the steering group is responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority and with UK legislation. The College has reviewed its compliance through the registration requirements with the Office for Students. The accuracy of promotional material rests with the Marketing Manager with activities approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

3.6   The student portal of the website contains information pertaining to admissions. Students confirmed that they had received accurate information, with access to two handbooks. The student handbook contains information on programme delivery, student support, resources, and health and safety; the College makes a commitment to providing accurate information through its signed agreement with students. The programme handbook includes module and programme information including regulations and grading criteria. Both are submitted to the University for approval and have been reviewed through the validation process. Module information is accessed through the VLE and content has been reviewed. Staff and students recognise the importance of the VLE as a learning resource and a means of communication; additionally it is currently used to monitor student engagement. Short videos published on the VLE are used to provide students with information on student support and further advice is planned, using this medium via an optimised platform.

3.7   The Head of Quality and Assurance is the author of internal documents and polices, including student facing documents such as the Student Representative Handbook and the Admissions Policy alongside the Quality Handbook for staff. Staff confirmed that policies are submitted to the Senior Steering Group for approval prior to ratification by Senate and that the Marketing Manager is responsible for maintaining consistency and corporate identity. The College is at the start of its quality cycle and intends to publish committee meetings on its website, with the first scheduled meeting of the Student Staff Consultative committee imminent.

3.8   The College operates procedures to ensure that there is internal approval of information provided in public and to its students, and regular oversight of public information by its awarding body takes place. The College is aware of its responsibilities to provide accurate information and to adhere to the University's requirements. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The College effectively manages its responsibilities for the production of information for its various audiences. The single Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.10   The College provides accessible and clear information about its provision. The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   The College's vision and mission are articulated through its strategic plan and affirm its aspiration to use technology as a platform for delivery and to provide exceptional student support through multiple platforms, using reputable world class content to deliver this vision. The Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy identifies five aims with the first seeking to progressively enhance and enrich the curricula in response to a changing environment with student needs integral to this. The College was subjected to the University's institutional and programme validation process in 2016 gaining approval in 2017 and has since proposed four new pathways compatible with its vision. Programme committees are charged with ensuring delivery of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy with the twice-yearly meeting of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee responsible for making recommendations on enhancement. The Academic Board has responsibility for enhancement of the College's academic provision and the monthly meetings of the Senior Steering Group are charged with monitoring academic performance against agreed targets.

4.2   These procedures, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.3   The College was commended for its commitment to the University's 'block and wheel' model of delivery during its institutional validation and for developing curricula that resonate with its student body, and for widening delivery to centres in Africa. The College's prior experience of block delivery has continued to inform the delivery of its current programmes, and the accelerated learning which it enables aligns with its focus on a mature student demographic in the UK.

4.4   The College's Learning Teaching and Assessment strategy is designed to provide the framework for the enhancement of student learning opportunities with an embedded implementation plan.

4.5   The review team considered the College's approach to enhancement by examining its strategies, policies, its academic committee structure and minutes of committees and tested a shared understanding of enhancement and its implementation through meetings with staff operating at all levels of the College. The team met with students to test the impact of this approach.

4.6   Through examination of documentation and in meetings with staff and students, the review team found evidence of approaches and activities that have the potential to enhance the student experience. These include the approach to inclusive student academic and personal support, and internationalisation of the learning and use of technology. While the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee may play a pivotal role in enhancement by identifying and disseminating effective and innovative practice, the current impact of the Learning Teaching Strategy in driving priorities could not be evidenced through discussions with staff.

4.7   Staff of the College expressed a consistent commitment to continual improvement of the learning experience at a strategic and operational level, with a number of initiatives that have enhanced, or are intended to enhance, the student learning experience. These included the 360º support for a diverse student intake, programme development,

technological preparation for launch of courses in Africa, the proposed arrangements for student representation and feedback, the approach to staff development including support for membership of the Higher Education Academy, and the use of diagnostic student testing. Use of the 360⁰ support services including academic advisors is underway with regular ad hoc meetings occurring between staff: staff meetings are being held on a monthly basis and the College recognises the need to have all weekly and monthly meetings documented.

4.8   While there are links between current and proposed enhancement activities and the College's Strategic Plan, its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and its quality assurance processes, a shared and consistent understanding of the College's strategic enhancement priorities in the context of its own mission and values was not evident at all levels of the institutions. There is a lack of clarity on how current activities support guiding principles, on where the deliberate planning of enhancement currently takes place, and on where the responsibility for oversight of enhancement priorities and activities lies. At this stage of the College's development, and in the absence of a defined enhancement strategy to articulate and shape its deliberate steps, the systematic planning and impact of activities for current students has not been fully assessed and it is not clear how data-led information arising from programme monitoring and review will be collated and used to support strategic enhancement priorities.

4.9   The College's use of its deliberative committee structure to provide integrated strategic direction and oversight of enhancement remains untested. Key committees, including the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and Academic Board, have yet to meet; the full spectrum of activities needed to plan and monitor enhancement have not yet taken place; the Learning and Teaching Strategy does not support a shared understanding of enhancement; the effectiveness of the College's approach, management and implementation of enhancement has yet to be assessed. Therefore, the review team recommends that the College further develops, establishes leadership of, and securely implements the strategy for enhancement.

4.10   The College has taken deliberate steps to enhance student learning opportunities, but there is a lack of oversight of its strategy, and inconsistency in awareness and understanding of its approach. Greater clarity is required to ensure a clearly articulated strategic approach to enhancement that is systematically embedded and robustly reviewed. The Expectation is met, but these shortcomings indicate weaknesses in the operation of the College's governance structure, and so the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.12   The College has taken deliberate steps to enhance student learning opportunities, but there is a lack of oversight of its strategy, and inconsistency in awareness and understanding of its approach. The single recommendation in this judgement area relates to the development, leadership and implementation of the College's enhancement strategy. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

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

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 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook](#).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

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

term in our review processes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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