Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of London School of Commerce and IT Ltd

November 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at London School of Commerce and IT Ltd. The review took place from 8 to 11 November 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Mike Coulson
- Mrs Catherine Fairhurst.

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

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

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of 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.

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 5.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] A dedicated section 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/about-us.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about London School of Commerce and IT Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at London School of Commerce and IT Ltd.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at London School of Commerce and IT Ltd:

- the effective use of independent learning plans to develop the potential of students identified as being at risk of failure (Expectation B4)
- the structured approach to detailed formative feedback on assessed work aligned with grade descriptors, which enhances students' understanding of their potential attainment (Expectation B6).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to London School of Commerce and IT Ltd.

By March 2017:

- ensure that minutes of committee meetings include full and accurate records of collegiate discussion (Expectations A2.1 and B5)
- systematically apply its stated process for annual programme evaluation (Expectations B8 and B5)
- ensure that the process for an appeal against an assessment decision is aligned with the requirements of the awarding organisation (Expectation B9)
- remove the requirement that a student wishing to appeal against an academic decision should pay a fee for doing so (Expectation B9)
- ensure rigorous review of all policies and handbooks to establish currency and alignment with practice (Expectation C)
- establish and implement a process to ensure secure and timely oversight of information provided on its website and virtual learning environment, and in social media (Expectation C).

By August 2017:

- ensure that academic planning and decision making are informed by independent external expertise (Expectation A3.4)
- apply and record systematically the process for selection and evaluation of programmes offered by awarding organisations (Expectation B1)
- provide students with access to external examiners' reports (Expectation B7).

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 School of Commerce and IT Ltd

London School of Commerce and IT Ltd (the College) is an independent privately financed college, operating from a site in east London. Its goal is to provide education to students that will ensure career progression through subsequent employment, further study and entrepreneurship.

The College is accredited by Pearson and ABE Qualifications to deliver programmes leading to their awards. Currently, the College offers a single programme leading to the award of the Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business from Pearson. Fifty students were enrolled on this programme in 2014-15 and continued into 2015-16. No students have been enrolled in 2016-17. The College has gained approval from Pearson to deliver a revised HND in Business programme at levels 4 and 5 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework, and intends to offer this programme from 2017 onwards.

In addition to its Principal and the Dean of Academic Quality and Enhancement, the College employs six members of teaching staff on a part-time basis.

The most recent QAA review was a Review for Educational Oversight, which took place in 2014, and which resulted in positive judgements. Since that review, the College has reduced the number of programmes that it offers, and has ceased to offer programmes from all of its awarding organisations other than Pearson. The QAA monitoring visit in 2015 found that the College had made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the review of 2014.

The College has addressed all of the twelve recommendations of the Review for Educational Oversight, albeit with variable levels of effectiveness. While some, including the revision to policies for teaching, learning and assessment, clarification of assessment practices and the review of committee structures, have been thoroughly addressed, others have not yet fully been completed, including those in relation to the development of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and students' awareness of external examiners' reports.

The College has continued most of the features of good practice identified by the Review for Educational Oversight by ensuring the continuing easy accessibility of teaching staff, and the support to student's personal and professional development offered by its student clubs.

Current challenges facing the College include the development of its marketing strategy to focus on recruitment of locally based students and the expansion of its base of teaching staff to enable the delivery of courses at levels 4-7 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework.

Explanation of the findings about London School of Commerce and IT Ltd

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

Explanation of the findings about London School of Commerce and IT Ltd

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The responsibility for setting the academic standards of the programmes offered by the College lies with the awarding organisations, which ensure that academic standards are aligned with the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

1.2 Pearson ensures the maintenance of academic standards for the Higher National programme through regular external verification reports and through its Annual Management Review. Although the College received renewed approval from ABE Qualifications in October 2015 to deliver programmes in Business Management at levels 5 and 6, it does not at present offer these programmes.

1.3 The maintenance of academic standards is the responsibility of the College through the Academic Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC). The College has developed a Quality Manual, and a wide range of policies aligned to the Quality Code and other external expectations.

1.4 Course specifications are prepared by Pearson and include learning outcomes, unit contents and mode of assessment for each course and level. The College is responsible

for designing relevant programme materials, including learning and teaching, and assessment.

1.5   The arrangements for the maintenance of standards would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.6   The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of the awarding organisations' reports and correspondence, AQEC minutes, and in meetings with the Chief Executive Officer and senior management.

1.7   The College's processes work effectively in practice for the courses currently running, as also confirmed by the most recent Academic Management Review report and external examiner's report. Senior managers are aware of their responsibilities towards the maintenance of standards.

1.8   The College has effective processes for the maintenance of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.9   Responsibility for the transparency and comprehensiveness of academic frameworks and regulations rests with the awarding organisations. The College uses its awarding organisations' regulations and policies in respect of quality assurance and academic standards to manage and inform course delivery. Its specific responsibilities for, and its involvement in, the maintenance of academic standards are detailed in its Quality Manual, and relevant internal policies and procedures.

1.10   The oversight of the internal academic frameworks to ensure compliance with awarding organisation regulations is undertaken through a formal committee structure. The AQEC has overarching responsibility for ensuring adherence to the policies and regulations of the awarding organisations, including learning outcomes and the required processes for marking and standardisation. These are transparent and clearly stated in the Student Handbook.

1.11   The Course Committee reports to the AQEC and is responsible for setting the delivery and conduct of all course assessment, and for ensuring that key performance indicators are met and that the internal verification process is effective. The Exam Board receives assessment results, deals with resubmissions as appropriate and confirms awards.

1.12   The design is sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met in regard to the College's currently offered programmes.

1.13   The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with senior management and teaching staff, and through scrutiny of the Quality Manual and relevant internal policies and procedures.

1.14   The College has devised its own Assessment and Internal Verification Policy for programmes at levels 4-7, which provides a comprehensive description for the associated processes. Marking, internal verification and standardisation of all assessment tasks are carried out internally and are subject to scrutiny and moderation by a subject-specific external examiner appointed by the awarding organisation. Reports provided by the external examiner are considered by the AQEC, which determines the necessary processes to address action points arising.

1.15   The AQEC meets every two months to fulfil its role in maintaining oversight of the College's academic frameworks. Although its minutes make frequent reference to the presentation of documents or of information, they typically do not include any record of the nature of subsequent detailed discussions leading to committee decisions, thereby failing to put the committee in a position to steer the College on assuring standards and quality in a consistent manner.

1.16   The Course Committee, which also meets at intervals of two months, receives information regarding course assessments in accordance with its terms of reference. In some instances its minutes lack sufficient detail to allow it subsequently to review exactly what has taken place. For example, minutes state that 'assignments are being checked by

the Edexcel checking service', whereas in fact only certain assignment briefs, the details of which are not specified in the minutes, were being checked. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure that minutes of committee meetings include full and accurate records of collegiate discussion.

1.17   In order to secure academic standards, the College has established appropriate academic frameworks and regulations to govern how academic credit and qualifications are awarded. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The shortcoming in respect of minutes of meetings constitutes a minor oversight, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.18 The definitive records for each programme on offer are maintained by the relevant awarding organisation, although the College maintains and analyses its own internal records of student achievement. Programme specifications are produced by the College and approved by the awarding organisations.

1.19 Assessment regulations are available through the awarding organisations' websites and are used to ensure that students obtain the credit required to progress through their programmes. For programmes leading to an award from Pearson, credit is considered and endorsed by the Exam Board.

1.20 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team considered their effectiveness by scrutinising awarding organisation and College regulations and in discussion with senior management, teaching staff and students.

1.21 The College has produced its own Assessment and Internal Verification Policy, which is available to staff and students via the website and in hard copy form in the library. It is issued to all new students at induction. Students also access the Pearson website for course and module information.

1.22 The College maintains a record of student attainment and produces a basic summary of each student cohort's progress. Transcripts and certificates are produced by the awarding organisation and are provided to students on completion of their studies.

1.23 Senior managers confirmed their awareness of potential changes to the programme following the revision of the HND in Business qualification to meet the requirements of levels 4 and 5 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework. The revised programme will be delivered for the first intake of new students after September 2016, envisaged to be in the first part of 2017. The College has not yet made the necessary revisions to its policies and procedures to comply with the revised specifications, but expects to have completed these by January 2017. Senior staff intend to arrange for training for teachers regarding revised modules, grading criteria and assignment briefs.

1.24 The College maintains a definitive record of each course and qualification offered and the awarding organisation makes effective provision of records of study to students and alumni. Although there is a need to amend or update details in documentation, particularly in relation to Pearson's revision of the HND in Business qualification, this will not require or result in major structural, operational or procedural change. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): 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

1.25   The College relies on its awarding organisations to set the academic standards for its programmes through the design, development and approval of modules and programmes, and to confirm that programmes meet the qualification descriptors and threshold standards of the Qualifications and Credit Framework. In respect of the HND in Business, Pearson as the awarding organisation establishes the full descriptions, specifications, aims, mode and format of assessment, and intended learning outcomes. There arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.26   The review team scrutinised course approval documents, external examiner's reports and the report of the most recent Academic Management Review. It met senior and teaching staff, and found that they understand and are able to articulate the division of responsibilities between the awarding organisation and the College, and the processes by which the College discharges its responsibilities.

1.27   The awarding organisation solely determines all changes and amendments to course structure and content. Pearson's Academic Management Review monitors the College's capacity to deliver the programme effectively, and therefore its ability to maintain academic standards. This covers the adequacy of financial and physical resources, academic governance structures and quality assurance mechanisms, particularly in relation to unit assessments. The February 2016 Academic Management Review confirms that the College fully complies with centre approval and recognition requirements and that the College's assessment strategy, processes and management underpin an assessment and internal verification system that reflects national standards. The external examiner's report confirms that there are effective procedures for the management of academic standards. Teaching staff use the programme specifications, and the Teaching and Learning Policy, to monitor and maintain academic standards.

1.28   The awarding organisations are responsible for the academic standards, design and approval of the programme. The single current awarding organisation has confirmed that the College effectively carries out its responsibilities in respect of programme delivery. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): 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

1.29   The awarding organisation, Pearson, is ultimately responsible for the academic standard of assessment by specifying unit learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria. The College is responsible for securing academic standards by judging student performance through assessment. The College's Assessment and Internal Verification Policy, based on Pearson's Assessment Guidelines, states that assessment is to achieve the stated learning objectives of the programmes. The assignment front sheet and module assessment form describe each assessment criterion, learning outcome, and the grading descriptor.

1.30   The Expectation is met in principle. This is because the College uses the assessment guidelines supplied by Pearson, and the assessment briefs in the module assessment guides clearly define learning outcomes and grading criteria.

1.31   To test the Expectation the review team considered a range of evidence, including programme specifications, assessment policies, minutes of the Exam Board and external examiners' reports. The team met students and staff responsible for assessment and oversight.

1.32   For the programme leading to the HND in Business the College designs the method and content of assessment. The assignment briefs are thorough, setting out intended learning outcomes and grading criteria, and are approved by the internal verifier and the external examiner. The external examiner reports that the assessments are largely set at an appropriate level of challenge. Students confirmed they understand the grading criteria as described in assignment briefs. Following a recommendation made by the external examiner the College sends assignment briefs to the assignment-checking service of Pearson for comment before issuing them to students - although the minutes of the Course Committee lack sufficient detail to allow reviewers to verify that this takes place consistently.

1.33   The College has an Academic Misconduct Policy, and with a view to upholding academic standards students submit their written assignments through plagiarism-detection software and confirm their identities by a signed declaration on all assessed work.

1.34   The external examiner samples marked assignments, reports on student performance and confirms that standards are appropriate, thereby ensuring that credit and qualifications are awarded only where students demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes through assessment. The most recent external examiner's report confirmed that assessment practice is largely sound, with the majority of assessors making accurate decisions and providing developmental feedback linked to learning objectives and assessment criteria.

1.35   In light of the oversight by the external examiner of the integrity of the College's assessment processes, and the responsibility of the awarding organisation for the design of modules and learning outcomes, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.

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

Findings

1.36   The College's monitoring and review processes rely on the Pearson Annual Management Review. The report of the most recent Annual Management Review confirms that academic standards are maintained through teaching and learning, assessment and verification. The AQEC is responsible for monitoring the College's provision. Course Committees review programmes annually and prepare an internal Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Report, which states the assessment outcomes and pass rates for each taught unit.

1.37   The design meets the Expectation because of the awarding organisation's Annual Management Review, which explicitly addresses whether UK threshold academic standards are achieved and maintained.

1.38   The review team tested the Expectation by reading the awarding organisation's Annual Management Review report, the College's Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Report, and committees' terms of reference and minutes, and in discussion with senior staff.

1.39   The College's internal Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Report is limited in its use of data, which consists of unit pass rates and student feedback question responses; there is limited evaluation of the data and it is not clear how the structure of the report could enable trend analysis. Nevertheless, the comprehensive Annual Management Review of the College confirms that centre approval and recognition requirements are fully complied with, and that the College has effective systems and processes in place for its current provision.

1.40   The College makes secure use of the awarding organisation's monitoring processes, and its provision meets UK threshold academic standards and the requirements of Pearson. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): 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

1.41   The responsibility for engaging external and independent expertise lies primarily with Pearson, which designs, develops and approves modules and programmes, and which appoints external examiners to oversee the maintenance of its academic standards. The College has accreditation by the matrix Standard for its advice and guidance services.

1.42   The awarding organisation's transparent use of external expertise would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.43   The review team scrutinised documents including the external examiner's report, the report of Pearson's most recent Annual Management Review, the report by the matrix Standard, and documentation relating to the College's policy on information, advice and guidance. The team also met senior and teaching staff.

1.44   Currently, the College does not design or develop its own programmes, and so relies heavily on the report produced by the external examiner for external expertise in maintaining academic standards. The College also draws on external expertise by employing part-time teaching staff who teach in other institutions. These links assist in setting and maintaining academic standards but do not provide independent external expertise.

1.45   The College has not established processes for using external and independent expertise in committee activities, such as the AQEC, or as part of its quality assurance processes. The strengthening of the College's alignment with the Expectation by the use of further independent external expertise may assist the College in its programme monitoring and review processes by developing awareness of good practice, and in the application of its enhancement strategy. With a view to strengthening alignment with this Expectation, the review team **recommends** that the College ensure that academic planning and decision making are informed by independent external expertise

1.46   Although the College makes effective use of independent external expertise in addressing the requirements of its awarding organisation's assessment processes and award of credit, the lack of such expertise to inform its own academic planning indicates a weakness in the operation of its academic governance structure. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met with a moderate level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.47   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. One Expectation is associated with a moderate level of risk; the remaining Expectations have a low level of associated risk.

1.48   There are two recommendations relating to the minutes of committee meetings and to the College's use of independent external expertise. There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

1.49   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.

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

2   Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The awarding organisations have overall responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes. In exercising the College's responsibility for programme delivery, assessment strategy and evaluation, the AQEC undertakes the selection and evaluation of programmes, with overall responsibility resting with the Principal through the AQEC. The Marketing Strategy defines the local demand for the programmes and student market.

2.2   The College's policies relating to programme evaluation and selection are sufficient to ensure the quality of learning opportunities, and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3   The review team read the College's policy and procedure document, the AQEC's terms of reference relating to programme approval and modification, and committee minutes. The team also met senior management, marketing staff and teaching staff.

2.4   The College's committee structures enable programme and module selection to be recorded: for example, the Dean informed a Course Committee about a module change after discussion with students, while AQEC discussed this module with the student representative. While the responsibility of the AQEC is to evaluate and select courses offered by external awarding organisations, minutes of its meetings do not reflect this responsibility: there are, for instance, no records of discussion of the introduction of the HND in Business prior to its approval. Although the College states that it considers trends within UK educational frameworks, the Expectations within the Quality Code, course reviews by awarding organisations, and local demand when deciding which programmes to deliver, there is no evidence of where these aspects are formally considered, nor of any formal consideration of the availability of resources for the delivery of new programmes. The review team **recommends** that the College apply and record systematically the process for selection and evaluation of programmes offered by awarding organisations. This would assist the College in ensuring that the intended programme as a whole is coherent in terms of its structure and academic integrity, and that assessment methods are aligned with programme content, learning outcomes and learning and teaching activities.

2.5   While the awarding organisation is responsible for the development and design of programmes, the College gives insufficient emphasis to assuring standards in its planning processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.6   The College places high regard on its processes for the effective recruitment of students and has devised an overarching Recruitment Policy based on the requirements of the Quality Code. The College's website provides appropriate information for students both prior to admission and in outlining the application process.

2.7   Prospective students are able to download the prospectus and the Student Handbook to provide further information on the College, and may receive pre-admission advice and guidance on the most appropriate course by telephone or email.

2.8   Applications are scrutinised and assessed by the College's admissions staff. Where appropriate, this includes assessment of prior qualifications and learning in accordance with the College's policy, using a standard pro forma. Selection is based on the admissions requirements and a final decision for acceptance or rejection is made and recorded.

2.9   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team considered their effectiveness by scrutinising the Recruitment Policy and other relevant documents, the College's website and AQEC minutes, and in discussion with senior management, admissions staff and former students.

2.10   Course descriptions on the website and in the prospectus cover mandatory and optional modules and clearly specify the minimum admission requirements for each course, together with the minimum required level of English. Applicants complete an application form, either downloadable from the website or available from the College, which needs to be completed by hand and sent to the College.

2.11   Prospective students may obtain advice and guidance from admissions staff prior to submitting an application. All applicants are interviewed in person by at least two staff from the Admissions Panel, who check eligibility against the course requirements, including the required level of English, and obtain evidence of identity and prior academic qualifications. Admissions staff may use software tests to assess the applicant's level of English if the interview suggests weakness in this area. The Student Welfare Officer implements detailed checks during the interview to ensure the applicant's true intention to study, in order to minimise withdrawals from the course. Admissions staff ensure careful adherence to the processes described in the College's Recruitment Policy and keep a simple record of admissions decisions.

2.12   The application form contains details of application fees and refunds, and provides students with the opportunity to declare any medical needs or disabilities. The College has adopted a Reasonable Adjustment Policy to accommodate a student declaring medical or physical needs, but to date has not admitted any students with such needs.

2.13   Students receive a comprehensive induction programme covering College policies, course requirements and regulations, health and safety, assessments and the support

available to them. They are provided with paper copies of relevant policies and regulations, including complaints and appeals, as well as the course handbook. Senior staff stated that some policies are also made available to students via the website, although it transpired that these had previously been removed in error and were only reinstated during the review visit.

2.14   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. As there have only been minor omissions or oversights that have had little impact on the integrity of the admissions process, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.15   The College's committees take responsibility for the oversight and improvement of teaching and learning, which is underpinned by a teaching and learning policy aligned to the requirements of the Quality Code. The Course Committee, which meets every two months, is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the programme and for the effectiveness of student induction, assessment arrangements and learning resources. It reports to the AQEC, which meets bi-monthly and has ultimate oversight of the academic provision.

2.16   The College has a policy underpinning staff training and development needs, which are identified through class observations, staff appraisals and by teacher request. There are systems in place for annual staff appraisal and regular class observations by senior management.

2.17   Formal feedback from students on the quality of teaching and learning is obtained at regular intervals using the Student Course Appraisal Form and compiled to provide overall analysis of student views on programme delivery, resources, development and information, advice and guidance.

2.18   These arrangements are sufficient to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.19   The review team scrutinised evidence covering staff appraisals, staff development, class observations and student feedback, and held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and former students.

2.20   Academic staff are experienced teachers and most hold postgraduate qualifications at either master's or doctoral level. Teachers confirm that they make effective use of the College's Teaching and Learning Policy to underpin their processes regarding assignments and to ensure sufficient time for private study to adequately inform their teaching. Teaching staff are offered supervision, annual appraisals and opportunities for development to ensure they maintain high standards of teaching practice. The staff appraisal form facilitates a clear linkage to any required training and development needs.

2.21   Teachers are encouraged to expand their knowledge and experience through compulsory attendance at internal training workshops and appropriate external conferences as part of their professional development. These cover relevant topics such as teaching and learning, assessment and assessor skills: for instance, a training workshop on contextualisation of assessment tasks was held in response to an issue identified by the external examiner. A number of teachers have either recently completed or are currently engaged in further academic study.

2.22   Teaching observations by senior management form an integral part of teaching and learning within the College. A recently introduced observation form elicits comments on teaching style, student learning and engagement and, following a one-to-one debrief, provides an action plan for improvement. Teachers also carry out peer observations with subsequent discussions. Good practice is identified through teaching observations and

external learning, and, following discussion in Course Committee meetings, is collated and published clearly within the College.

2.23 The College provides two internal verifiers in compliance with awarding organisation requirements and ensures appropriate levels of training. In addition, at least one other teacher is appropriately qualified to fulfil this role. In response to good practice identified at an external training session, the College has introduced a timely scheme of standardisation meetings this year to ensure parity of marking across the teaching team.

2.24 The College makes effective use of regular formal and informal feedback from students, including that from student representatives on academic committees, to ensure that the quality of teaching is maintained. For example, the College took prompt action to replace a teacher following adverse comments from students concerning the clarity of teaching. The analysis of formal feedback highlights students' consistent appreciation of the quality of course delivery and information provided. Over 90 per cent of students believed that their course increased their levels of self-confidence, communication and interpersonal skills.

2.25 The College works effectively with its staff, students and other stakeholders to articulate, systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.26   The College has developed a Student Enhancement Strategy, effective from September 2016, to enable student development and achievement and ensure students reach their full potential. Students are able to develop their academic potential through regular formative assessments both in class and in tutorials. Teachers provide detailed written and oral feedback on students' written work, offer tutorials to discuss academic issues and set targets for improvement, and schedule additional classes as needed.

2.27   Individual learning plans (ILPs) are used by teachers to comment on student progress and to set targets for achievement. A mentoring scheme matches individual students with academic and student mentors to provide them with support and guidance that will increase their self-confidence and employability.

2.28   Students are encouraged to develop their personal learning and employability skills through participation in the extracurricular entrepreneur and cultural clubs. These take place typically two or three times per term and, although currently organised by students, the College has recently appointed a part-time member of staff to oversee and further their development.

2.29   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team scrutinised documents relating to the Student Enhancement Strategy, samples of students' written work, ILPs and tutorial records, and met senior managers, teaching staff, professional support staff and former students.

2.30   Tutorials are scheduled on request either by the student or the teacher, particularly in cases where students are identified as needing additional support, and are used effectively to discuss academic issues and set targets for students to improve. Records of subsequent review to ensure achievement are not always consistently maintained. Students confirmed that they have access to additional one-to-one support, as and when required, and that the College also provides additional sessions and workshops as needed.

2.31   Teaching staff are effective in identifying students at risk of failure and developing ILPs, which are used in a more intensive manner than tutorials by identifying the specific learning issues, setting goals to address these, and devising an appropriate and timely action plan to achieve them. ILPs are subsequently reviewed to ensure satisfactory progress. The Dean collates all identified learning issues into a table of Learning and Assessment Issues and Constructive Approaches, which is discussed at Course Committee and provides teachers with a comprehensive overall perspective of student support needs. The proportion of diplomates progressing to university study, 50 per cent in respect of the most recent cohort, offers evidence of the effectiveness of the College's approach to support. The effective use of individual learning plans to develop the potential of students identified as being at risk of failure is **good practice**.

2.32   The College's strategic development plan includes the establishment of a personal mentor for every student. There is, however, a lack of clarity among staff and students as to whether this pertains to a staff mentor providing academic support, a student mentor for personal support, or both. Mentoring records indicate an inconsistency in the implementation

of this scheme as only a small number of students have actively participated to date. Further development of the mentoring scheme may enable the Expectation to be more fully met.

2.33   The cultural and entrepreneur student clubs, which take place outside the academic timetable, provide an opportunity for students to broaden their interpersonal and organisational skills as well as their employability. In addition to social activities, the clubs' internal and external activities provide students with relevant and useful skills in writing curricula vitae and in interview techniques, and the review team heard of plans to establish a workshop on creating a small business to meet additional student needs. Although the Student Handbook states that external speakers are used to broaden student learning, and also contains a clear policy ensuring the appropriateness of all such visitors in compliance with the implemented Prevent Strategy, this does not currently happen in practice as student club activities take place at external venues instead.

2.34   The College provides students with an appropriate range of learning resources, including rooms with information technology provision, a bespoke VLE and a library. Regular formal feedback from students includes their views on the provision of learning resources, with the majority expressing satisfaction. A number of students make use of local libraries and the British Library. Although the VLE lacks overarching programme specifications, policies and course handbooks, it is used regularly by staff to provide students with lecture notes, assignment briefs and notices.

2.35   The College has arrangements and resources that are effective in enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.36   The College has an informal and a formal approach to student engagement. The Student Handbook explains the formal approach. Student representatives attend the AQEC and Course Committees. Student surveys are completed twice, firstly during the term and subsequently at the end of the term, and take the form of questionnaires, which ask students' opinions on programme delivery, facilities and resources, development and achievement, and information and advice. The Dean evaluates the questionnaires and the analysis is discussed at the AQEC. The College also has an informal approach because of the small numbers of students, the tutorial system and the availability of the senior staff.

2.37   The policies for student engagement would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.38   The review team tested the Expectation and the effectiveness of student engagement by reading policy documents, the Student Handbook, student surveys, the student submission to this review, and by meeting senior staff, teaching staff, former students and professional support staff.

2.39   Former students and minutes of meetings confirm that student representatives attend the AQEC and Course Committees. The lack of a record in committee minutes of student views and the committees' responses to them supports the recommendation under Expectation A2.1. While surveys of student views are wide ranging, have generally positive outcomes and are analysed in detail, there is no evidence that the committees formally consider them or that they feed into the annual programme evaluation to enhance students' learning opportunities. This shortcoming supports the recommendation under Expectation B8.

2.40   Nevertheless, the College is responsive to students' concerns through informal channels such as tutorials and dialogue with the management team. The student submission to this review and former students spoke very positively about the College's approach to resolving issues and its provision of a supportive atmosphere. Students can express their views informally in discussion with teaching staff and senior management, and feedback on actions taken by the College is posted on the College noticeboard. Students expressed the view that the College did listen to their views and took action when possible, and offered examples of actions the College had taken in response to their concerns, including the rapid change of a lecturer who was in the view of students unsuited to the course.

2.41   The College has a clear view of its approach to student engagement and offers a supportive environment with an accessible senior team. There is evidence that the College values and responds to the students' contributions. The review team concludes that the Expectation 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   The College is responsible for the methods and content of assessment, marking, internal verification, and providing feedback to students within the academic framework and regulations of the awarding organisation. The Assessment and Internal Verification Policy describes the College's assessment policies, regulations and processes. The aim of this Policy is to ensure the standards of assessment are consistent, transparent and in line with the requirements of the awarding organisations. The Exam Board considers the assessment outcomes, which are confirmed by the AQEC.

2.43   The design of the assessment procedures meets the Expectation in principle, as the College has an Assessment and Internal Verification Policy based on the awarding organisation's guidelines.

2.44   The review team scrutinised minutes of the AQEC and the Exam Board, the Assessment and Internal Verification Policy, the Disability and Reasonable Adjustment Policy, assignment briefs and marked assignments. It also considered external examiners' reports as well as meeting senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.45   The College's assessment policies, regulations and processes are explicit, transparent and accessible. Staff consistently operate the processes for marking assessments and moderating marks. Students confirmed that they fully understand assignment submission procedures and regulations for late submission.

2.46   Teaching staff give students formative feedback before the final submission and students confirmed that they find this helpful and developmental. Marked assignments demonstrate that feedback to the students is detailed, timely, constructive and developmental, and clearly indicates how a student could have achieved a higher grade. Feedback is encouraged and facilitated by a standard feedback template. The structured approach to detailed formative feedback on assessed work aligned with grade descriptors, which enhances students' understanding of their potential attainment, is **good practice**.

2.47   The Disability and Reasonable Adjustment Policy, intended to create an environment in which all students may realise their full potential, includes examples of adjustments, such as allowing extra time for completion, which may be made to assessment tasks. The AQEC considers mitigating circumstances that may have affected students' work.

2.48   The College operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, which enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they meet learning outcomes. The review team concludes that the Expectation 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

2.49   The awarding organisation appoints and trains the College's external examiners, who are responsible for endorsing the outcomes of the assessment processes. The external examiner visits the College annually to sample a range of completed assessments and subsequently reports on student achievement, the College's management of academic standards, the effectiveness of its assessment instruments, and student support and review.

2.50   The AQEC considers the external examiner's reports and develops an action plan to deal with any identified issues. The Assessment and Internal Verification Policy, the policies and procedures document and the Quality Manual describe this process. The Course Committee, and subsequently the AQEC, review the actions taken on the external examiners' reports.

2.51   The design meets the Expectation in principle and the documentation clearly describes the procedure for consideration of the external examiners' reports.

2.52   The review team scrutinised external examiners' reports, the Assessment and Internal Verification Policy, the College's policies and procedures, and committee minutes. It also met senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.53   The AQEC considers the external examiner's report and develops an action plan as shown by the minutes. The most recent external examiner's report, in 2015, identified four essential actions to be taken before the external examiner could endorse the final assessment results. These issues were discussed at the AQEC and were subsequently resolved satisfactorily, the College having introduced further procedures to ensure that merit and distinction characteristics are appropriately contextualised in assessment design. The College has continued to implement these procedures in respect of more recent assessments.

2.54   Although students affirmed that they are aware of external scrutiny of their assessments, the College does not provide information about the external examiner and does not make external examiners' reports available to students. The review team **recommends** that the College provide students with access to external examiners' reports.

2.55   The awarding organisation appoints the external examiner, whose reports are thoroughly considered and responded to by the College. The shortcoming in respect of the availability of reports to students will not require a procedural change. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.56   The awarding organisation has ultimate responsibility for the monitoring and review of the validated programmes, which it fulfils through its Annual Management Review. The College is responsible for ensuring appropriate processes for routine annual monitoring of its programmes. The AQEC is responsible for monitoring the educational activities at the College. Course Committees review programmes annually and the subsequent Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Report sets out the assessment outcomes and pass rates for each taught unit.

2.57   The design meets the Expectation because of the awarding organisation's Annual Management Review and the external examiner's report. These are comprehensive, regular and systematic. The College has procedures for programme evaluation and also for monitoring programme delivery.

2.58   The review team tested the Expectation by reading the awarding organisation's Annual Management Review, the College's Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Report, external examiners' reports, terms of reference and minutes of committees, and through discussion with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.59   The Coordination with Awarding Organisations Policy states that the effectiveness of programme delivery is monitored by feedback from students, tutors and assessors, peer observations, and observations by the senior members of staff. Students contribute to programme monitoring through surveys, and although Course Committees refer to student feedback reports there is no evidence in minutes of detailed consideration of student feedback or of monitoring of programme delivery, nor of staff or external expertise contributing to programme monitoring.

2.60   The Coordination with Awarding Organisations Policy affirms also that every programme will be evaluated annually and a report submitted on its effectiveness. Although the review team received an internal Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Report containing unit pass rates and student survey responses, it is not clear where this is discussed or how it contributes to the enhancement of the student experience. While the AQEC is responsible for monitoring educational activities, minutes of its meetings extend only to a brief consideration of the non-submission of assignments.

2.61   There is a detailed process to protect the academic interests of students when a programme is closed.

2.62   The College's processes for annual monitoring are not applied systematically or consistently. The review team **recommends** that the College systematically apply its stated process for annual programme evaluation, thereby enabling it to more securely establish oversight of programme delivery by identifying good practice and any overarching themes, and to use the outcomes to inform organisational planning so as to enhance students' learning opportunities.

2.63   The College's quality assurance procedures for monitoring the delivery and reviewing the courses are broadly adequate, but shortcomings in terms of the rigour

with which they are applied mean that the College's provision is not securely monitored. The review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

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

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

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

Findings

2.64   The College has clear and comprehensive procedures for academic appeals and student complaints, which include a flowchart clearly describing the process. These are mentioned briefly in the prospectus, are included in the Student Handbook provided at enrolment, and are also downloadable from the website. Students are provided with paper copies of the complaints and academic appeals procedures and policies during induction. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.65   The review team examined the complaints and appeals policies and procedures, and met senior managers, former students and the student welfare officer.

2.66   A form for student complaints and appeals is provided in the Student Handbook. Forms are also available at the College's reception desk, together with a comments box for anonymous submissions. Students understand clearly the difference between a complaint and an appeal.

2.67   The Complaints Policy confirms that a student who believes that a complaint has not been appropriately dealt with may refer it to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. However, the Academic Appeals Procedure does not refer to a student's right to refer an appeal to the awarding organisation once the College's procedure has been exhausted, although Pearson's policy requires otherwise. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure that the process for an appeal against an assessment decision is aligned with the requirements of the awarding organisation.

2.68   The Academic Appeals Procedure includes a processing charge of £50 to a student wishing to make an appeal. No students have made an appeal in recent years. The inclusion of a non-refundable fee constitutes a barrier to students wishing to make an appeal. The review team **recommends** that the College remove the requirement that a student wishing to appeal against an academic decision should pay a fee for doing so.

2.69   The College has fair, accessible and timely procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. However, shortcomings in respect of alignment with the awarding organisation's procedure for appeals, and in respect of the fee charged for making an appeal, are indicative of insufficient emphasis given to assuring quality in the College's planning processes. The associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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 no arrangements for the delivery of learning opportunities with other organisations, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.71   The College does not offer programmes leading to the award of research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.72   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. One Expectation in this judgement area is not met with a moderate risk. Two Expectations are met with a moderate risk. All other Expectations in this judgement area are met with a low level of risk.

2.73   There are two features of good practice in this judgement area. The first arises from the College's use of independent learning plans. The second relates to the use of structured formative feedback.

2.74   There are five recommendations in this judgement area. The first relates to the College's processes for the selection and evaluation of programmes. The second concerns students' access to external examiners' reports. The third is in relation to the implementation of the College's policy for programme monitoring. The final two recommendations concern the College's policy for appeals against academic decisions.

2.75   There are no affirmations in this judgement area.

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

3   Judgement: The quality of information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   The College aspires to achieve the requirement of its matrix Standard accreditation, awarded in July 2016, namely that all public information is clear, timely, fair, current and transparent and easily accessible by the intended audience.

3.2   The College's Public Information Policy and Procedure is aligned to the requirements of the Quality Code and provides a structure for assuring the accuracy of information provided on the website and in the prospectus, handbooks and policies issued to staff and students.

3.3   The website forms the main source of communication with prospective students and the general public, providing details of courses as well as the application form and associated information. The prospectus and Student Handbook are available to download from the website. College and course information is made available to staff and students in printed form and, to a limited extent, on the VLE.

3.4   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.5   The review team examined the College's Public Information Policy, its website and VLE, and met the Chief Executive Officer, senior managers, professional support staff and former students.

3.6   The detailed Public Information Policy and Procedure clearly specifies the processes for ensuring that the information provided on the website and in printed documents provided to staff and students is accurate, transparent and fit for purpose. It does not cover the VLE or social media, but does include notice boards within the College, which are checked regularly and old notices removed. Changes to published information are reported to the AQEC. Students confirm that information provided for them on the website and within the College is helpful and accurate.

3.7   The Principal reviews the website at intervals of two months and records all changes in a logbook. Nevertheless, the review team noted an instance of information on the website regarding the admissions process being inconsistent with policy and practice, where the text did not reflect a decision made by the AQEC to amend it, as well as an instance of some College policies being unavailable on the website. The review team heard that these failings in the timely updating of information were due to errors by an external contractor, but concludes that oversight of the content of the website is insufficiently rigorous.

3.8   While there is an overarching policy for managing the VLE that covers access and the type of material it contains, it does not include a formal process to ensure oversight of information for relevance and accuracy by senior management. Teaching staff are responsible for uploading their own lecture materials and are monitored by the Student Welfare Officer, who is responsible for uploading administrative information. The College makes limited use of social media, which is maintained by the Student Welfare Officer and informally monitored by the Chief Executive Officer. The College does not have a formal

policy in place covering the use and oversight of social media. The review team **recommends** that the College establish and implement a process to ensure secure and timely oversight of information provided on its website and virtual learning environment, and in social media.

3.9   College policies and other formal documents contain clear evidence of version control. However, inaccuracies in some contents indicate a lack of care in ensuring alignment between the text and current operational practice. For example, the Staff Training and Development Policy includes a compulsory requirement for teachers to present a paper to their peers each term, which is no longer current practice (see Expectation B3). In addition, the Public Information Policy and Procedure, marked as effective from January 2016, states that 'the website is tested by a group of volunteer students from the HND Computing and Systems course', a practice which the College has ceased to operate. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure rigorous review of all policies and handbooks to establish currency and alignment with practice.

3.10   The information produced by the College for its intended audiences about its provision is broadly fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, but its processes have some shortcomings in scope and terms of the rigour with which they are applied. The problems identified are, however, confined to a small part of the provision. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

The quality of information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

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

3.13   There are two recommendations in this judgement area. The first relates to the oversight of information provided in electronic formats. The second concerns the currency and alignment with practice of the College's policies.

3.14   The review team concludes that the quality of 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's recently developed Student Enhancement Policy contains five strategic goals, namely to add value to students' current qualifications, to increase their motivation and self-esteem, to enhance their employability and entrepreneurial skills, to achieve continuous improvement of the College's services, and to strengthen the learning and teaching infrastructure. The AQEC will review this strategy annually and is responsible for its implementation.

4.2 The College has a senior management team, a Strategic Plan and a Student Enhancement Policy, which provide a framework for identifying opportunities for enhancement. This framework has the capacity to enable the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies and procedures by examining the Strategic Plan, Student Enhancement Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy, student club documentation, and committees' terms of reference and minutes. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, professional support staff and former students.

4.4 The College is taking deliberate steps to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities by supporting students' progression towards employment and higher education through advice and guidance and study support. The careers advice and guidance meets the requirements of the matrix Standard. The student club coordinator develops students' employment skills. Teaching staff offered examples of how the tutorial system positively encourages students to realise their ambitions for further study, including the development of blended learning, the use of the VLE and the provision of learning plans. Noting that 50 per cent of the 2014-16 cohort have succeeded in achieving places to study at a university, the review team formed the view that these initiatives result in actions that positively impact on the quality of student learning opportunities.

4.5 Senior staff and teaching staff affirmed that good practice in teaching and learning is disseminated through teaching observation, staff appraisal and Course Committee meetings. Although this is not formalised in the Teaching and Learning Policy, teaching staff cited examples of collective consideration of good practice including assessment standardisation and the development of blended learning.

4.6 The College has a positive approach to enhancement and has taken strategic steps to improve the quality of the learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.8   The College takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The single Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.9   There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

4.10   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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