Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of London School of Management Education Ltd

October 2017

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 Management Education Ltd. The review took place from 9 to 11 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Glenn Barr
- Professor Christopher Maguire
- Ms Kate Wicklow (student reviewer).

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/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

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 awarding organisations **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The individualised approach to considering student needs and circumstances through the application and admissions process (Expectation B2).
- The approach taken by the School to inspire a research community through its International Conference (Expectation B3).

Recommendations

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

By February 2018:

- ensure anonymity of individual student information in public documents to maintain confidentiality (Expectations B4 and A2.1).

By April 2018:

- ensure effective control of internal record keeping to avoid errors and inconsistencies (Expectations C and A2.1).

By September 2018:

- ensure strategic oversight of student support to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness (Expectations B4 and A2.1)
- engage students strategically as partners in the School's educational and decision-making processes (Expectations B5 and A2.1)
- develop and adopt methods to analyse trends in complaints and appeals to ensure appropriate institutional oversight (Expectation B9)
- formalise enhancement priorities to secure effective dissemination and implementation of the enhancement strategy (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps the School is taking to implement its employer engagement strategy (Expectation A3.4).

About the provider

London School of Management Education Ltd (LSME) is a higher education organisation which aims to promote personal growth and development by offering affordable and high quality skills enhancement programmes in teacher training, business and health and social care. Its vision is to play a leading role in the delivery of global educational services in partnership through radical lifelong learning training, equipping managers, health and social care professionals, tutors, teachers and trainers with modern and transformational standards. Its mission is to provide affordable and high quality training for aspiring and practising managers, health and social care professionals and educationalists which is innovative and global in perspective.

Strategic aims for 2016-19 are as follows.

- Maintain and enhance academic excellence and innovation to increase a portfolio of courses including academic research, drawing on key strengths in establishing an exemplary reputation with awarding organisations (Pearson and OCR) and other regulatory authorities.
- Maintain and enhance student access, success and retention by introducing free short course and bursary schemes and improving student engagement and support mechanisms.
- Enhance academic and non-academic staff training and development aligned with the School's aspiration to have its own degree awarding powers.
- Strategic engagement with external institutions including other higher education institutions and employers both in the UK and abroad.
- Implement major improvement in facilities and expansion in infrastructure and learning resources.

The School currently occupies four floors of a property in Gants Hill in the London Borough of Redbridge with planning permission from the local authority for future extension in the rear of the building. Classrooms can accommodate about 600 students in total and are well furnished. The virtual learning environment (VLE) provides the learning resources required for independent studies.

The School's awarding organisation is Pearson and it has undergone successful annual monitoring and external examination by them.

In January 2014, LSME transferred its quality regulation from ISI to QAA. The School underwent a review of Educational Oversight in April 2014 with annual monitoring visits in 2015 and 2016. Reports of the monitoring visits in February 2015 and 2016 recognised engagement with the Quality Code and systematic mapping of provision against the Code as good practice.

The School works with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Education (DfE) for courses designated for government funding, administered by the Student Loans Company (SLC). From the 2014-15 academic year, students' records have been monitored by the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) and from the 2015-16 academic year by the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) requirement. The School also works closely with HEFCE and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to meet their requirements for the Prevent initiative and student complaints respectively.

The Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) qualification has been phased out since September 2014 and replaced by the Diploma in Education and Training (DET) qualification. The management and leadership qualifications at Levels 5 and 7 are

currently not offered due to insufficient student recruitment.

All qualifications are aligned with the FHEQ. The Diploma in Education and Training (DET) qualification affords learners the opportunity to register with the Society of Education and Training (SET), a professional membership organisation of the Education and Training Foundation for practitioners working in the post-14 education and training sector. This enables an application to be made for QTLS (Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills) status, inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

There are 241 mature (over 18 years old) students (new and continuing) taught across the three main undergraduate programmes, with the Diploma in Education and Training programme constituting the largest population of students in the College. All Health and Social Care and Business students enrol on the HND qualification for two years and complete their HNC units in the first year of their two-year studentship. None of these learners are registered for the HNC qualification only.

Key challenges identified by the School include: securing partnership with an awarding body to validate a Level 6 top-up from its HND provision; recruitment of a wider range of students particularly school leavers; greater engagement with employers to enhance employability in curricula and improve student progression to employment.

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 School is guided by its awarding organisation in ensuring qualifications it delivers align with The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). Relevant Subject Benchmark Statements are referred to in the development of courses, and are referenced in programme specifications. During course design, staff ensure that units are chosen at the appropriate level, and academic staff receive training on the standards expected for delivery. Ultimate responsibility for alignment rests with the awarding organisation and qualifications are approved by Ofqual. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.2   To test the Expectation, the review team met with staff of the School, saw materials pertaining to course design and approval, and reviewed programme specifications. School staff have an appropriate understanding of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements and how they are used in the delivery of the programme and staff have received training. Programme specifications make clear reference to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.3   Documentation relating to programme design and review clearly showed how the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements have been considered, and the Academic Committee uses them in the development of programmes.

1.4   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because the School operates within the parameters of its awarding organisation.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.5   The School is governed by an Advisory Board which is chaired by the Academic Director. Members of the Board consist of senior staff from the School and external members from the community. The Board oversees the management of the School and has overall responsibility for its management. The School has a number of deliberative committees including the Academic Committee, Departmental Committees, Staff-Student Committee and the Attendance and Disciplinary Committee and Welfare Committee. The Academic Committee is chaired by the Principal and has overarching responsibility for the academic management of the School. It has definitive responsibility for academic standards, with new programmes, annual monitoring, and external examiner reports all being discussed and approved in this committee.

1.6   The School has a Quality Manual and Policies and Procedures documents, which provide appropriate regulations and procedures to maintain standards. These are reviewed and approved by the Academic Committee. Staff are also formally able to feed into the review of policies through the staff evaluation form.

1.7   To test the Expectation, the review team analysed minutes of the committees and meetings of the School, saw the policies and procedures relating to the higher education provision, and met with staff and students. The Advisory Board has recently reviewed the committee structure of the School. The review formalised the Staff Committee and created a new Staff-Student Committee. While this review gave students a greater opportunity to be more involved in the management of the school they are yet to be represented on decision-making bodies. This has led to a recommendation under Expectation B5.

1.8   While the terms of reference and minutes of the Advisory Board and Academic Committee show a delineation of responsibility regarding the strategic oversight of academic standards, there is a need to recognise that the Advisory Board, with its external representation, acts as a governing board of the School rather than simply an advisory committee and is a strength of the School's governance structure.

1.9   The School has a detailed Quality Assurance Manual and Policies and Procedures document. Staff are provided with an opportunity to contribute to changes to policies through the Staff Policies Feedback Form and Discussions held at Academic Committee. It was unclear from the minutes of the Academic Committee how policies were formally signed off, but meeting with staff confirmed this happens through the Principal after discussion at the meeting. The School keeps hard copies of minutes as the definitive record of their committees. There is not a formal process to keep electronic copies of documents. Because of this, during review, the team saw examples of minutes of the same meeting that were slightly different in content. This has led to a recommendation in Part C: Information.

1.10   Overall the review team found that the School has appropriate mechanisms in place to manage academic standards appropriately, but there are some minor omissions in the

way in which it operationalises the management of quality. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

1.11   The School delivers Pearson awards, consequently the responsibility for the specification of the programmes remains with Pearson, while the responsibility for providing programme information is the School's. The School holds centrally an 'Awarding Body Accreditation Centre File'. This file contains all information relating to the accreditation including course specifications and a database of all students who have been awarded certificates and all those who have been registered. The School uses the Pearson specifications, which contain programme structure, units, aims, intended learning outcomes, and approaches to assessment and delivery. The specifications are subsumed into the School's own professionally branded course specifications, as well as student and staff handbooks. The course specifications are available on the School's website.

1.12   Departmental Committees are responsible for producing and maintaining the course handbooks, which are approved by the Academic Committee. Course tutors are required to use these as a reference point for delivery and assessment as well as programme monitoring and review. Departmental Committees maintain a detailed file of all records of the programme.

1.13   Assessment regulations are available to students on the Pearson website and broad assessment information is included in the programme handbooks. Detailed information linking learning outcomes and assessment criteria is published in the unit descriptors.

1.14   The School's regulations require all changes to courses to be approved by the relevant Departmental Committee and the Academic Committee. Substantive and major changes must also be approved by the Advisory Board. All Departmental Committees are required to review their programme documents annually before the beginning of the academic year to ensure currency. Versions of the programme specification in force at the time of registration are maintained on the VLE for relevant cohorts of students throughout their period of study. The School maintains a record of student achievement and certification. Transcripts and certificates are produced by the awarding organisation and are provided to students on completion of their studies.

1.15   The team found that the documented arrangements for programme development, approval and oversight, together with the comprehensive information made available to students through handbooks and the VLE, enable the Expectation to be met in theory.

1.16   The team tested this Expectation by considering student and staff programme handbooks, the School's Quality Manual, the minutes of the Academic Committee, Advisory Board and Departmental Committees, information provided on the School's website and the VLE, and by meeting with staff and students. The handbooks were found to be comprehensive and were confirmed to be accurate by the Pearson Standards Verifier. Staff reported that they reviewed their programmes annually at departmental level before reporting to the Academic Committee. Students confirmed that the information they received was full and clear.

1.17   The team found that the School's use of the awarding organisation's programme specifications, together with its management of programme approval process, the maintenance of the Awarding Body Accreditation Centre File and the clear information provided to students mean that Expectation A2.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.18   The School's awarding organisation, Pearson, has responsibility for the approval of programmes in line with external reference points. The School's responsibility is to meet the requirements of Pearson through producing appropriate programme specifications with contextualised assessments where appropriate. The School implements assessment activities at the appropriate level for the qualification, with reference to Subject Benchmark Statements, FHEQ and the QCF and the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Regulations. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manual and the Policy and Procedure Manual set out programme approval procedures. Validation processes align with the responsibilities of the School in relation to the awarding organisation, which enables the School to meet the Expectation in design.

1.19   The team considered the School's self-evaluation document and associated supporting evidence. It met with senior staff, teaching staff and support staff to explore the relationship between the School and its organisation in securing academic standards through programme approval.

1.20   The School follows awarding organisation approval procedures, checks the demand for a programme and sufficiency of appropriate staff and physical resources. The School designs its own programme specifications within the Pearson framework, selecting pre-designed units to contextualise as a coherent programme meeting local and national needs. Internal School processes ensure that the required documentation is complete and that the programme is at the appropriate level. Processes for minor modification of programmes through annual review allow module content and assessment to remain current. External examiners (Standards Verifiers) confirm that the standards of awards are appropriate and have given consistently positive feedback on the School's use of the external reference points.

1.21   The School meets the requirements of its awarding organisation concerning the use of external reference points in programme approval, and effectively manages its responsibilities for securing academic standards through validation. The School meets the Expectation 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

1.22   The awarding organisation retains ultimate responsibility for setting and maintaining the academic standards of the School's awards. The School delivers programmes in accordance with its institutional agreements with the awarding organisation.

1.23   The School Assessment Policy and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manual establish processes for ensuring that assessments demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes at the appropriate level. Policy and procedure documents reference the appropriate chapters of the Quality Code and external reference points. The School's Academic Committee has overall responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance of all courses.

1.24   Policies and procedures of the School and awarding organisation ensure that credit is awarded for the achievement of learning outcomes at the appropriate level. These would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team examined Pearson regulations, the School's quality assurance documents and procedures, including Standards Verifier reports and minutes of examination boards, and met with students, senior staff and staff responsible for assessment.

1.25   Assessment design, marking and moderation processes ensure that the award of credit and qualifications for the achievement of learning outcomes align to threshold academic standards. Staff making internal verification judgements receive appropriate training. Actions taken by the School as part of the verification process and in response to Standards Verifiers show the processes to be effective. The Boards of Examiners consider the outcomes of assessment and confirm progression and award decisions, although detailed discussion of student achievement takes place with the Pearson' Standards Verifier and certification process. The Boards report to the Academic Committee on the conduct and outcome of assessments ensuring the maintenance of academic standards. Standards Verifiers provide confirmation that assessments conform to national threshold and awarding organisation standards.

1.26   In conclusion, the School applies awarding organisation assessment regulations and procedures effectively. Quality assurance arrangement take account of threshold and institutional academic standards allowing students to demonstrate learning outcomes through assessment. The review team concludes that the School meets the Expectation in both design and theory and that 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

1.27   Both the School and the awarding organisation have annual monitoring and periodic review processes; however, ultimate responsibility for monitoring and assuring academic standards rests with the awarding organisation. Internal mechanisms for quality assurance such as course reviews, internal verification of students' work, the annual monitoring process and the observation of teaching and learning are in place to monitor the maintenance of academic standards required by the awarding organisation.

1.28   The School's arrangements for internal processes of monitoring and review and external monitoring by its awarding organisation and external examiners, enable the School to establish that academic standards are achieved and maintained. These would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.29   The review team examined completed minutes of meetings and annual monitoring reports to check conformity with the processes set out in the policies and procedures. Meetings with senior staff and teaching staff provided further evidence of the application of these procedures.

1.30   Pearson Academic Management Review documents confirm that academic standards are comparable to other institutions in the UK and are appropriate for the programmes. Standards Verifier reports confirm that programmes meet threshold and institutional academic standards and that assessments are valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient and have demonstrated that learning outcomes have been achieved. The reports also confirm the marking and verification of assessments by appropriately trained and qualified staff. The annual monitoring process considers Standards Verifier reports and appropriate actions, allowing the School to satisfy itself that it maintains academic standards. The Academic Committee maintains oversight of all academic matters including standards and monitoring.

1.31   Comprehensive school and awarding organisation processes of review and monitoring at programme and institutional level secure the maintenance of academic standards. Therefore the School meets the Expectation in both design and operation 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

1.32 The School's provision is validated by Pearson who are responsible for appointing and training Standards Verifiers. The School enables Verifiers to undertake their role by supplying students' work, involving them in the assessment processes, and arranging meetings with staff and students of the School. The Standards Verifier Annual Reports are reported at Academic Committee and discussed in departmental committees, where actions are decided and monitored. The awarding organisation takes ultimate responsibility for externality and the School engages with these processes. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.33 The team met students, academic and management staff, and local employers, as well as reviewed documentation pertaining to Standards Verifier reports and their consideration.

1.34 There is clear consideration of Standards Verifier reports through the deliberative committee structure. Actions are monitored, and students get access to reports through the VLE and attendance at Departmental Committees. The School has developed a periodic review process, which itself has been externally reviewed. At the time of the review, the School was preparing to undertake its periodic review, and confirmed external academics would be involved in the process.

1.35 The School has recently passed a new employer Engagement Strategy that aims to strengthen external engagement in the community and beyond. The Advisory Board of the School already has external community members as voting members, and the Director is currently strengthening relationships with local employers. The review team met a selection of new and longstanding partners of the School, offering students work placements and careers advice. Each has signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the School and is looking forward to working more closely with staff and students. Therefore the review team **affirms** the steps the School is taking to implement its employer engagement strategy.

1.36 Overall the School is managing its responsibilities in relation to externality effectively and therefore the review team finds the Expectation met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.37   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.38   All the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and the risk is judged low in each case. There were no features of good practice. Recommendations in this area, regarding the confidentiality of student information in documents and strategic oversight of student support, relate primarily to Expectations in Part B while the team considers that they were also relevant to Expectation 2.1. There is one affirmation in Expectation A3.4 which relates to the steps the School is taking to implement its employer engagement strategy.

1.39   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 School **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 Although the validation of higher education programmes is the responsibility of the awarding organisation, the School is involved in aspects of the design, development and approval of those programmes. The School follows awarding organisation approval procedures and checks the demand for a programmed, provision of appropriate staff and of physical resources. The School designs its own programme specifications within the Pearson framework, selecting pre-designed units to contextualise as a coherent programme meeting local and national needs.

2.2 The Handbook of Academic Regulations, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manual and in the Policy and Procedure Manual set out programme approval procedures. The Advisory Board and the Academic Committee are central to the process of validation. New programmes pass through a six-stage process. The Advisory Board considers market demand, risk and financial implications in line with the School mission and strategy with commentary invited from the Academic Committee. The Academic Committee then examines resource, staffing and other requirements, consulting course leaders and lecturers prior to formal approval by the Academic Committee. An external adviser provides an unbiased opinion and formal consultation with the awarding organisation follows. The Academic Committee works with programme teams to manage the development of validation and programme documents ensuring that they conform to FHEQ level, Subject Benchmark Statements and awarding organisation approval process and requirements. The final stages are the formal application for accreditation and implementation, including promotion and recruitment. The School also has appropriate processes for the minor and major amendment, suspension and withdrawal of programmes.

2.3 These processes and procedures allow the School to meet its responsibilities for design, development and approval of programmes as set out in the agreements with its awarding organisation. Clear documentation, formal processes and opportunities for staff, students and external representatives to contribute to programme development and approval allow Expectation B1 to be met.

2.4 The review team considered the School's self-evaluation document and associated supporting evidence, including the School's strategic plans, agreements with awarding bodies and documents relating to the internal course approval procedure. It met with senior management and teaching staff to explore the procedures for design, development and approval of programmes.

2.5 The School has clear criteria and processes for programme design, development and approval with effective academic and strategic oversight by the Academic Committee and Advisory Board. It recently followed an abbreviated process for the transfer of its DTLLS programme with OCR to DET with Pearson and for its QCF business programme to RQF. The School completed the first three stages of its validation process in its search for a validating body for a top-up qualification from its HND programmes. The School undertook

a feasibility study and discussed its plans in Advisory Board and Academic Committee. It is awaiting agreement from a validating body before it will be able to move to the final stages of the process. There is evidence of student demand for the top-up but as the School is not yet in the final stages of the process, there has not been student consultation on the details of any specific programme. Similarly, the School has yet to apply employer and external expertise on a specific programme structure. Awarding organisation documentation confirms the appropriateness of resources, teaching staff, assessment methods and programme quality procedures, as well as production of a contextualised programme specification. Programme design uses appropriate external reference points including the FHEQ, QCF/RQF and Subject Benchmark Statements.

2.6   Awarding organisation and School procedures for programme design, development and approval are clear and applied appropriately. Documentary and meeting evidence confirms the effective application of those policies and procedures. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.7 The School provides accurate, clear and full information about its admissions process and provision on its website. This includes guidance on the admissions process, selection criteria, the application form, terms and conditions, prospectus, course brochures and course specifications, accreditation of prior learning procedures and appeals and complaints procedure. The admissions process is directed by an Admissions Officer, currently fulfilled by the School's Principal, and underpinned by an Admissions and Enrolment Procedure.

2.8 The application procedure provides a tailored approach to individual student's aspirations and achievements enabling them to make informed decisions. The process concludes with an interview that enables the School to confirm the applicant's ability in English and numeracy, intention to study, any special arrangements that may be required and provides the opportunity to further guide the students as to the most appropriate options for them. Successful applicants are provided with clear guidance on the enrolment process through the School's website and the offer letter and pack. There is an induction process to support applicants to transition to becoming successful students. The School reviews the recruitment and admissions process annually. The review includes analysis of any changes in the Quality Code and wider regulatory field, feedback from applicants and statistical analysis of the correlation between applicant characteristics and success.

2.9 The School has recognised through their annual monitoring and periodic review processes that it needs to ensure a better diversity in student cohorts especially related to age and ethnicity. A Widening Participation Strategy has been developed by the School and is available on its website. The School is currently securing funding to operationalise this strategy and is considering projects which would help meet the overall objectives. It has yet to write a formal project plan for the strategy, or a process in which to monitor its developments and this has contributed to a recommendation in Enhancement.

2.10 The team considered that the School possesses a clear admissions policy and procedure that is fair and expeditious, supported by clear and full information and administered by senior and trained staff, which would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.11 The team tested this Expectation by viewing the School's Admissions Policy, the information provided to students, and by meeting with students, senior staff, academic staff and support staff. Staff reported that the Principal and one other senior member of staff acted as the admissions officers for the School. This assured consistency and equity in the application of the admissions process.

2.12 The team noted and students confirmed that full, clear and helpful information about the application process and entry criteria is readily available on the School's website and via the course information brochures. Students also reported that the interview process is highly supportive and tailored to the needs and aspirations of the individual student. Students were highly complimentary about the support they received from the School throughout the admissions process, which enabled them to make informed decisions about the School

and its programmes. They also confirmed that outcomes are communicated in a clear and timely fashion. The team found that the School's: individualised approach to considering students' needs and circumstances through the application and admission process is **good practice**.

2.13   The School also has a process in place to administer applications where accreditation of prior learning is applicable. Students reported that they were made aware of the possibility for accreditation of prior learning during the application process and one student reported having used it. Staff confirmed that accreditation of prior learning is discussed with students during the recruitment process.

2.14   The clear, full and transparent Admissions Policy and procedures ensured that Expectation B2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.15   The School has a Teaching and Learning Strategy and Student Charter which informs its delivery. The Academic Committee is responsible for ensuring appropriate learning resources are in place and has oversight of the strategy. During the admissions process, students are interviewed to ensure the course offers the right opportunities for the student, and a number of learning tests are run to understand the skills and proficiencies of the applicant. The School's approach to Learning and Teaching is analysed and reported, with external scrutiny in the Annual Report.

2.16   The School organises an induction process which includes an introduction to the VLE, library, student services, plagiarism and referencing, research methods and an overview of the academic requirements of the course. Students undertake reflective journals as part of their course and complete an individual learning plan with tutors with whom they meet weekly. Staff at the School hold the appropriate qualifications, and the School employs a number of full and part-time staff. New staff are offered training and support to undertake their role including a training needs analysis. Staff are observed by their peers once per term and are encouraged to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) activities as part of their appraisal process.

2.17   The strategic processes in place to monitor and review teaching practice, supporting students' transition into higher education and providing appropriate facilities to support students' learning would enable this Expectation to be met. To test the Expectation the review team met staff and students, saw documentation pertaining to staff development, had access to minutes of School committees, and saw policies, procedures and strategies pertaining to teaching and learning.

2.18   Having recently moved premises, the School has expanded its library and IT facilities. Students are happy with the access they have to learning materials, and the extension to the premises will provide further study and social space for students. The School has recently joined the Higher Education Academy, and at the time of review, staff were working on their individual fellowship submissions. Staff development processes such as appraisals and peer observation place an emphasis on self-evaluation and support staff to take ownership of their practice. Staff complete a self-evaluation annually, and after each unit of delivery; this coupled with formal peer observation and appraisal processes enables the School to have an overview of staff training needs. Staff are entitled to 30 hours of CPD per year and an annual Training Agenda is created to address both strategic and specific development needs of staff.

2.19   The School understands the importance research plays in the enhancement of the student learning experience. Staff are encouraged to undertake research, and the School has a Research Strategy. As part of this, the School Director organises an International Research Conference, the last of which was themed around responsible research in education and management. Both staff and students had the opportunity to participate and support these conferences, and those met by the review team spoke of how these events inspired and enhanced their practice. The development of an active research community and

the commitment of the senior management and staff in a school of this size is unusual in the sector. There is an active and public strategy driving this work, and the School is making good progress. Therefore, the review team considers the approach taken by the School to inspire a research community through its International Conference to be **good practice**.

2.20   Students of the School are very satisfied with the teaching they receive and the learning facilities available to them, and feel their voice is listened to when there are issues. The annual reviews by the awarding body confirm that the School has the appropriate mechanisms to maintain strategic oversight. Therefore, the review team finds that this 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

2.21   The School has a Welfare Committee. Its terms of reference are to have oversight of matters relating to student welfare, and student support functions of the School. The School also has an Attendance and Disciplinary Committee which monitors individual students' engagement with their learning and deals with issues of poor behaviour. The review team found significant overlap in the content of these two committees, with the Welfare Committee spending a large proportion of its time discussing individual student issues rather than evaluating the student support procedures and practices. This has contributed to a recommendation under Expectation B4.

2.22   The School appoints a Student Welfare Officer who oversees the welfare activities of the School. The Welfare Committee, chaired by the Principal, acts as an oversight committee for welfare provision and makes recommendations to the Academic Committee. The School has a number of policies and processes to aid student progress including the Equality Opportunity Policy, Attendance Policy, Disability Policy, Learning Support, and Student Welfare Policy. As part of admissions and induction, students undertake a diagnostic assessment and complete individual learning plans. The School offers individual weekly tutorials to students that cover both academic and personal issues. Tutorials are recorded on Tutorial Review Forms and student progression is discussed with teaching teams at departmental meetings. This process is captured in a Student Tutorial Policy. Tutors are supported to signpost students to either the School Student Welfare Officer, or to external support organisations.

2.23   The School embeds employability skills through the curriculum, and careers days provide students with guidance on specific future career options. Courses include the opportunity for work experience, or formal work placements, which further provide opportunities for students to develop their practical skills.

2.24   The School has a range of policies and procedures for student support services, and students are able to engage in a range of activities which support them in their academic, personal and professional needs. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.25   To test the Expectation, the review team met staff and students at the School. The team saw evidence of School committees and policy documents and saw evidence of specific intervention activities for individuals and groups of students.

2.26   The School has a high retention and pass rate for its courses, and senior managers and staff monitor student engagement and attainment closely through its committees. The review team saw many examples of where individual student's circumstances were discussed at many of the School's committees. Staff are proud of the bespoke support they offer to students, and students are very satisfied with the level of guidance, and care given to them both academically and personally. However, the review team saw a number of examples where discussions about individual named students and their private circumstances were minuted formally in meetings. These meetings sometimes included other students present in the room and un-redacted minutes were given to the review team throughout the process. The School believes it is ensuring confidentiality through its approach to holding copies of minutes centrally, but this does not provide adequate protections for student's situations being circulated to external quality bodies, members

of the committees, or fellow students who are able to attend the meetings. Therefore the review team **recommends** that the School ensure anonymity of individual student information in public documents to maintain complete confidentiality.

2.27   The VLE supports achievement by providing learning materials and discussion forums. This also allows disabled students unlimited access to learning materials to support their studies. Staff met by the review team had a clear understanding of the Disability Policy and ways in which reasonable adjustments could be made to the learning environment and assessment for disabled students.

2.28   The School provides a variety of opportunities for students to think about their future. Career days, guest speakers, and the International Conference give students ideas about what they could achieve after completing the course. Students were complimentary about the careers advice provided, and employers the review team met were happy to provide additional support for students.

2.29   The School has recently developed a Widening Participation Strategy that aims to improve the diversity of the student body, and address the skills needs of the local community. This strategy is yet to be operationalised, and at the time of the review a project plan had not yet been developed. The School was also in discussions on how to monitor the progress of students by different characteristics.

2.30   The Welfare Committee exists to oversee the student support offer at the School, disseminate good practice and identify enhancements to Academic Committee. However, at present the meeting focuses on sharing the support needs of individual students, and in some part, duplicates the work of the Attendance and Discipline Committee. The team found no evidence that the School was undertaking holistic evaluations of the support services provided to students other than through collecting student feedback, nor were trends in support needs identified through the Welfare Committee or elsewhere. The School does have oversight of student progression and achievement, but lacks evaluation of central support activities such as careers interventions and pastoral care. There is also no engagement with external policy developments in the sector. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the School ensure strategic oversight of student support to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.

2.31   Overall the School provides a number of individual and collective interventions to enable students to achieve and flourish. It has identified the need to be proactive in ensuring equality of opportunity and students are satisfied with the support provided. The School does need to tighten up policies in relation to confidentiality to ensure sensitive information is not accidentally divulged to inappropriate persons, and a more developed approach to evaluating services is needed. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.32   The School has adopted a range of approaches to support student engagement in the assurance and enhancement of the educational experience. These include induction and end-of-term questionnaires, suggestion boxes, discussion forums, the student and staff committee, termly inter-class representative meetings, student representation on the Departmental Committees and on the recently established All Staff Committee. The School's approach to student engagement is promoted through its website and through the Student Charter and the Student Engagement Policy, which are published on the VLE. The School provides a student representative's handbook setting out the student representative's role and duties.

2.33   The team considered that the School's defined student engagement mechanisms, including a structure for formal student representation, use of surveys and operation of focus groups, have the potential to enable Expectation B5 to be met.

2.34   To test this Expectation the team viewed School documentation detailing the range of student engagement mechanisms it employed. The team also read completed module reviews, the results of student surveys, self-evaluation documents and the minutes of deliberative committees concerned with student engagement. In addition, the team met students, student representatives and members of staff.

2.35   The student body does not have representatives on the School's most senior committees: the Advisory Board and the Academic Committee nor operational committees such as the Student Welfare Committee. During meetings, staff indicated that the School had taken a parental approach to its relationship with students and had, as yet, not adopted an approach of treating them as partners in the educational process. The team **recommends** that the School seeks to engage students strategically as partners in its quality assurance arrangements. However, staff described the many ways in which students were engaged in the life and operation of the School and the support they received. Student representatives reported that they felt well-supported in their roles through induction training and one-to-one meetings with staff. They also reported that the student representative's handbook was very useful.

2.36   There is evidence that the School actively reviews student feedback and acts upon it. A summary and analysis of student feedback is presented in the Student End of Term Feedback Report and in the Student Induction Feedback Report. Consideration of student feedback appears in subject annual reports and the minutes of departmental meetings, the Staff Committee and the Staff-Student Committee. The School's annual report provides narrative on student feedback but there is no explicit summary of student feedback or the actions and responses to it in the School Annual Report.

2.37   The School credits student engagement and feedback with stimulating a range of enhancements including the move to a new building, improvements in internet access, increase in hard copy library stock and amendments to assessment mechanisms. The School informs students about the action it has taken through the VLE, in class discussion and open events. The School has this year introduced the Student-Staff Committee and has recognised the need to monitor student engagement practices annually. It plans to do so by involving students in the review with the use of online questionnaires.

2.38   The team considers that the School provides a willing and supportive approach to student engagement which falls short of treating students as full partners. In recognising the strongly supportive culture of the School's approach to its relationship with students, the team considers the Expectation to be 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

2.39   The School has the responsibility for the setting, first marking, and moderation of assessment and for providing assessment feedback to students. The School's Assessment, Extenuating Circumstances and Accreditation of Prior Learning Policies articulate the School's overall approach to assessment and align with the regulations of the awarding organisation. The School structures its policies for assessment around Chapter B6 of the Quality Code to support the fair assessment of students. Assessment processes allow students to achieve learning outcomes through assessment in accordance with awarding organisation assessment regulations. Procedures for reasonable adjustments in assessment and recognition of mitigating circumstances are in place.

2.40   The School Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy governs claims which are documented on a tutorial review form. Documents inform students of the possibility of accrediting prior learning during application. The Academic Misconduct Policy and Disciplinary and Attendance Committee provide procedures for avoiding, identifying and tackling the various forms of academic misconduct. Students learn how to reference and avoid misconduct during their induction sessions and in class sessions and use plagiarism-detection software to submit assignments.

2.41   The School operates under agreements, regulations and with its own policies and procedures providing a clear framework for equitable, valid and reliable assessments. School procedures for recognition of prior learning, avoidance of academic misconduct, moderation and conduct of assessment boards are thorough. These would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.42   The review team considered the School's self-evaluation document and associated supporting evidence, including the School's policies, regulations and processes relating to the conduct of assessment. The team met with the head of the School, senior staff, teaching staff, support staff, students and employers to confirm the effective operation of the processes.

2.43   The School's detailed Assessment Policy includes helpful diagrams to aid teaching staff with assessment planning and recording. Heads of department monitor teaching and assessment and provide training on assessment. External consultants provide training on the appropriate level of assessment in accordance with the FHEQ.

2.44   An assortment of assessment tasks provide variety to the student experience with assessment methods shared across subject areas and departments. The assessment of work-based learning and practice and the use of relevant scenarios and case studies provide students with a foundation for future employment, applying theory to practice. The Work Experience and Volunteering Policy and Placement Handbook underpin work-based and practical learning. Placement providers support student assessment, with teaching staff conducting all workplace assessments.

2.45   Thorough internal verification processes conducted by appropriately trained staff ensure that assessment instruments enable all students to demonstrate they have met the intended learning outcomes. Inter-departmental standardising meetings further secure comparability of assessment judgements. Standards Verifiers confirm that assessment tasks are at the appropriate level, with clear contextualised criteria in accordance with the awarding organisation's requirements and the FHEQ. Verifiers confirm well-maintained assessment records, and fairly conducted boards of examiners. Programme teams respond appropriately to these reports, for example in amending grading procedures to reflect student referencing and improving moderation processes.

2.46   Students confirm that induction training in referencing is helpful and that the School satisfies requests for refresher training. To support them in their assessment practice students can access useful study skills materials on the VLE. Students submit work for assessment through plagiarism-detection software, which they find useful, in order to check that they are conforming to the guideline of less than 30 per cent similarity. Teaching staff acknowledge that the 30 per cent limit is a general guideline which they can increase according to the nature of the task and correctly cited sources. Students confirm that they receive timely and constructive formative feedback within three days of assignment submission. School targets are to provide formative feedback within one week and summative feedback within a further week.

2.47   Students and Standards Verifiers praise the variety of assessments, the positive use of feedback and techniques to allow students to become reflective learners. National Student Survey (NSS) results on assessment and feedback, although not analysed by the School, exceed sector benchmarks.

2.48   Retention across the School is 92.5 per cent with 89.3 per cent pass rates for 2015-16. With three intakes per year, retention rates for most 2016-17 cohorts are 100 per cent. Students can receive support during the process of completing assessment tasks from other students acting as mentors. Although informal, students who have received and acted as mentors find the process valuable and helpful.

2.49   Policies, regulations and processes governing assessment are explicit and accessible. Information available to students on how to apply for the accreditation of prior learning is clear and procedures to deal with claims are effective. The School has processed two claims in the last two years with positive outcomes. Students confirmed the process helpful in securing transfer of studies from other institutions. Late submission of work for assessment is subject to appropriate capping according to School and awarding organisation regulations. Students judge a further financial penalty for late submission as fair and equitable rather than disadvantaging poorer students. The Attendance and Disciplinary Committee and the Student Welfare Committee consider circumstances which may lead to late submission, although the work of the committees often overlaps, with both committees discussing students' personal circumstances. Applications for consideration of mitigating circumstances in assessment go to the Programme Leader, usually after discussion in tutorials. The Principal receives the applications for formal approval, granting a new deadline to successful candidates. If circumstances are ongoing, students receive additional support and tutorials with action plans to prevent escalation. Overall, procedures are clear and fair although as noted in B4 and A2.1, minutes of meetings often identify by name students and their personal circumstances which has led to the recommendation in those Expectations.

2.50   In summary, the School's management of assessment allows students to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes for their programme of study. Processes

for conducting assessments are valid and reliable. The 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

2.51   The awarding organisation, Pearson, is responsible for the appointment, training and management of external Standards Verifiers in line with the relevant agreements. The School provides information to the Standards Verifiers in relation to policies, procedures and regulations which affect the assessment process. Verifiers review assignment briefs to ensure they are fit for purpose and the School has a moderation policy which manages their relationship with the Verifiers. Verifiers receive a sample of students' work in which to moderate marks, and they meet with staff and students of the School. Verifiers are not members of the School's Board of Examiners, but their views are taken into account when confirming student marks. Verifier reports are received after each moderation visit using the Pearson template. These reports are received at the Academic Committee and disseminated to the Departmental Committees for action.

2.52   The Expectation is met in theory through the School procedures in relation to handling their responsibilities to work with the Standards Verifiers. Ultimate responsibility for this Expectation rests with the awarding body.

2.53   To test the Expectation the team reviewed the committee minutes and annual reports of the school, saw Verifiers' reports, reviewed policies and procedures relating to external examining, and met with staff and students. Students met by the team confirmed they have access to Verifier reports through attendance at departmental committees, on the VLE, and some had met the current Verifier. The review team notes that the external Verifier reports are broadly positive, and discussions about Verifier feedback take place regularly at School committees. The School also uses this feedback in their annual reports.

2.54   Overall, the School has appropriate processes to support the role of the Standards Verifiers and learn from their feedback. Students are provided with opportunities to meet and engage with the Verifiers, and have full access to the Verifier reports. Ultimate responsibility for Verifiers lies with the awarding organisation and therefore this 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

2.55   Annual Monitoring and Periodic Review are responsibilities shared between the awarding organisation and the School. The School has its own extensive monitoring and review processes, designed around the Quality Code. Programme teams develop end-of-year course reviews which include quality improvement plans. Standards Verifier reports and School management information on recruitment, retention, achievement and progression support the annual monitoring process. Student views feed into the review process through survey data and records of student meetings. Departmental annual monitoring reports feed into the Academic Committee for further scrutiny and final approval. The approved report contributes to the whole school annual report after sharing with student representatives and academic staff.

2.56   The School has processes for periodic review of programmes and for managing the withdrawal of programmes based on academic decisions or changes to the curriculum of the awarding organisation. Detailed monitoring processes designed to align with the Quality Code and processes for regular and systematic programme review allow the Expectation to be met in theory.

2.57   The review team considered the School's self-evaluation document and associated supporting evidence, including the School's programme review documentation and associated action plans. The team met with the Head of Provider, senior staff, teaching staff, support staff, students and employers to confirm the effective operation of the processes.

2.58   Records of meetings and review documentation show effective quality improvement processes within the School including clear strategic oversight of programme monitoring and review processes. Extensive use of data gathered through School-wide management information systems inform review and monitoring of higher education programmes throughout the annual cycle. Monitoring of applications, admissions, retention, absence, achievement and progression statistics takes place as part of higher education performance monitoring by School management, at programme level and by Academic Committee and Advisory Board. However, not all data has been cross-matched to maximise analysis, for example identifying trends in complaints and appeals or identifying student achievement by demographics. The School has not yet analysed the National Student Survey for 2017 to compare programme performance or broader student satisfaction.

2.59   The School does not explicitly identify enhancement opportunities through the programme review process, but the clear identification of strengths and weaknesses and forward-looking action plans are effective in proposing improvements to student learning opportunities arising from the review process and clearly linked to the School's mission, vision and values.

2.60   Procedures for closing programmes were implemented for the DTLLS and the HND Business (QCF) qualifications discontinued from September 2014 and September 2015. Standards Verifiers confirmed that the procedures are effective. Programme and School review procedures identified the potential demand for a progression top-up qualification to Level 6. Student involvement in monitoring and review is through feedback in meetings and questionnaires, while employer involvement emerges in the new employer engagement

strategy which includes employer input into the curriculum to meet local employer needs. The School has responded quickly and effectively to QAA annual monitoring reports since its original review in 2014, providing confidence in the efficacy of its quality assurance processes.

2.61   The review team concludes that the School's monitoring and review processes are effective, regular and systematic and result in actions to secure improvements. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.62   The School has in place policies and procedures for academic appeals, appeals against admission decisions, appeal against being withdrawn and complaints. These are accessible and published in the School's Policies and Procedures Manual; the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure and the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure are also published on the School's website and are referred to in the programme handbooks. The Student Complaints Policy and Procedure offers students the opportunity to resolve complaints informally at the initial stage. The timescales set out within the appeals and complaints processes indicate that appeals and complaints are resolved in a timely manner. The School includes an external stage in the complaints procedure as well as reference to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) where appeals or complaints are not upheld. The scope and appropriateness of the policies and procedures, together with their publication on the School's website would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.63   The team tested these policies and procedures through consideration of the School's Policies and Procedures manual reviewing records of individual complaints, seeking evidence of review of the complaints process and by holding meetings with staff and students. It is not clear from the documentation where or from whom within the School a student may seek independent advice and support in bringing an appeal or complaint. However, in the meetings staff reported and students confirmed that students have a 15-minute meeting each week with their personal tutor during which academic and pastoral issues can be raised. Where the student raises a concern or complaint this is logged in the notes of the meeting and progressed by the personal tutor. The School may wish to consider specifying explicitly in its procedures where a student should seek support in making a formal complaint or appeal. This may include the personal tutor and others where the personal tutor has a conflict.

2.64   On inspection, the team noted that the Student Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure would benefit from having the grounds of appeal more clearly specified and reference to the students' right to refer their case to the OIA once it has exhausted the School's internal mechanisms. The self-evaluation document provides a summary table of appeals and complaints, which total nine for the 2015-16 academic year, all of which were resolved to the student's satisfaction. However, the School does not yet formally review the handling of complaints and appeals or trends in the number and context of the appeals and complaints themselves. The School is aware of this and has identified it as an area to be developed. The team considers this to be a necessary and useful instrument in institutional quality assurance. The team **recommends** that the School develop and adopt methods to analyse trends in complaints and appeals to ensure appropriate institutional oversight.

2.65   The team considers that the clear policies and procedures, their dissemination through the School's website and the systematic and proactive support provided to students by staff, together with the additional steps the School is taking to enhance its processes enables Expectation B9 to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.66   The School does not have any formal agreements with external bodies, other than for the purposes of offering work placements to students. The School has developed a placement handbook which outlines the requirements for mandatory work-based learning in the HND in Health and Social Care and the DET qualification.

2.67   Students are responsible for finding their own work placement, though the School provides support to secure a good quality opportunity. Once a placement has been secured, the provider must sign a Memorandum of Understanding which secures the relationship between the School and the placement provider and enables the provider to understand the academic context in which the placement sits. The School has appropriate procedures to manage placement providers, which would enable this Expectation to be met. The review team received documentation pertaining to the policies and procedures of the School, and met with staff, students and local employers to test the Expectation.

2.68   Providers met by the review team had a good understanding of how their work opportunities fit into the learning objectives of the course. The School monitors students' progress on placement through a visit to the provider, and feedback from students. Staff who support this process are given training for the role. Students are happy that the support they receive from both the placement provider and the School are sufficient. A placement coordination meeting helps the School track students' progression and manage relationships with providers. Some students undertake internal placements at the School, teaching and mentoring students on other programmes the School offers. Placements are evaluated on a Placement Evaluation Form.

2.69   Overall, the School has the appropriate processes in place to ensure that students undertake work placements in a safe and appropriate environment. The new Employer Engagement Strategy will bring new connections to the School and enhance this part of their provision. The review team therefore finds this Expectation met with a low associated risk.

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

2.70   The School does not offer research programmes, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.72   Of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area all were met. Expectations all had low levels of associated risk except that for B4 which is moderate. There are two features of good practice in this area and four recommendations.

2.73   The features of **good practice** are identified in Expectations B2 and B3. There is a detailed application and admissions process by which students are offered the opportunity for two interviews, one with administrative staff in which they are given information about the programmes, qualifications, fees, assessment and progression opportunities. The second interview is conducted by the Head of Provider or the Principal and examines the student's commitment to study, career aspirations and suitability for the programme. This process seeks to ensure recruitment with integrity.

2.74   The School is committed to engendering and encouraging an ethos of research which informs development and delivery of programmes. This is exemplified by the School hosting an international conference which is now an annual event. This is informed by the School's links with research communities and knowledge networks in India. It now provides an opportunity for students to engage with visiting academics and present their research projects.

2.75   Of the four recommendations two are to be found in Expectation B4, one in B5 and one in B9.

2.76   The review team found that personal information from applications for consideration of mitigating circumstances were included in minutes of meetings, which are essentially public documents. The team recommends that this information should be anonymised to ensure complete confidentiality.

2.77   The team found limited evidence of strategic oversight of support offered to students. The School seeks to widen its recruitment to attract younger students who may require a more strategic approach to support.

2.78   The School has processes for dealing with complaints and appeals which are understood by students, but the recording of complaints has only recently taken place and there has been no analysis of these to identify any trends or consider improvements.

2.79   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the School **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 School's website hosts a full and pertinent array of information relevant to prospective students and other stakeholders. These include the School's vision, mission and values documents, programme specifications, learning resources, information on how to apply, the School's prospectus, achievement and retention data and a range of salient policies and procedures. The website was redesigned last year to enhance the presentation of this information. The website is easily navigable and the information it holds is easily accessible. For current students, the School provides course information on the internal VLE. Staff are able to access all the guidance and documentation that they need in relation to quality assurance processes and procedures for the management of higher education programmes from the staff intranet. The School has a Public Information Policy and Procedure, which provides a broad structure and responsibilities for assuring the accuracy of information provided on the website, VLE and in the prospectus, handbooks and policies issued to staff and students.

3.2　The review team found that the scope and detail of the information provided on the School's website, and the programme information provided to students on the VLE, together with the policies, procedures and guidelines available to staff on the staff intranet and the division of responsibilities for the management and approval of information are sufficient to enable the Expectation to be met.

3.3　The team tested this Expectation by viewing programme handbooks, programme specifications, the VLE, examining the School's website, minutes of committees, and by meeting with students and staff. The team found that School policies and other formal documents contain clear evidence of version control. However, many policies and procedures are published in different collections and individually. This may lead to difficulty in managing accuracy and currency of all versions. For example, the review date of some policies and procedures is different to the review date of collections in which they appear. In one instance, this led to different versions of sets of the same minutes being presented to the team.

3.4　During meetings, staff reported that the Academic Committee has primary responsibility for academic policies, procedures and other information, the Advisory Board approves all information and that the Principal approves the information that is placed on the website on behalf of the Board. The website is internally audited and revised at the beginning of each academic year. Programme leaders are responsible for the provision of course-related material such as the student handbooks and programme specification, which are approved by the Academic Committee. The responsibility for the provision of academic transcripts rests with the programme leaders and these are approved by the Principal. Information posted on the VLE is managed by a designated VLE administrator who checks to ensure accuracy before they are uploaded. The School also uses institutional social media outlets including Facebook and Twitter to communicate with learners. Information posted on social media is edited by the administrator and agreed by senior management before it is published. These controls and responsibilities are not fully set out in the

Published Information Policy and Procedure, nor is there consistent evidence of information having been signed off.

3.5   Students were positive about the extent to which the information available to them is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible. Students confirmed that programme information helps them to understand what they need to do in order to succeed, that learning materials are available and that they know how to access Standards Verifier reports. At the end of their studies all students receive an official transcript from the School providing their final grades. A diploma certificate is provided separately by the awarding organisation.

3.6   The information produced by the School for its intended audiences about its provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, but the processes for the oversight of the currency and accuracy of information would benefit from greater rigour in the recording and evidencing of the review controls and the authority over those controls. In addition, the team was concerned that the principle of anonymity was not strictly observed when reporting on students in committee minutes. The team **recommends** that the School take steps to ensure effective control of internal record-keeping to avoid errors and inconsistencies.

3.7   The School's website and VLE, with the range of pertinent and current information provided on them, together with the controls to ensure the accuracy of that information and the additional mechanisms such as open days, meetings and telephone calls used to provide information to applicants and students enables the Expectation to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.8   In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is moderate. The School provides a comprehensive range of information to students, applicants, employers and others, which is current, accurate and trustworthy. There are no affirmations or features of good practice. There is one recommendation around oversight of internal record-keeping as inconsistencies were found. The team also felt that the recommendation in Expectation B4 concerning ensuring anonymity of student information in public documents should also apply to this Expectation

3.9   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the School **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 School vision, mission and values establish the basis for the enhancement of learning opportunities. Quality improvement processes, regular monitoring of programme performance, action planning and student involvement provide opportunities for identifying enhancement. The School gathers and analyses student and staff opinion through surveys and student representatives. School processes for monitoring and review provide opportunities to reflect and improve provision at programme level. Departmental committees, the Academic Committee and Advisory Board allow identification and discussion of improvements which feed into action plans.

4.2 Opportunities for enhancement and sharing good practice arise from quality improvement processes and from listening to student opinion. Improving student learning opportunities is a routine part of managing the School. Although there is no specific enhancement strategy, the terms of reference of both the Advisory Board and Academic Committee set out their respective roles in taking deliberate steps to secure continuous enhancement. These would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.3 In testing the School's strategic and operational approach to improving the quality of students' learning, the review team met the Director, Principal and senior staff. Meetings with teaching, support staff, students and employers confirmed the commitment to improve. Minutes of committee meetings, policies, review documents and the self-evaluation provided evidence of where the School identified and implemented improvement opportunities.

4.4 The School has effective strategic leadership and an ethos of encouraging improvements to student learning opportunities. Clear mission, vision and value statements set the scene of enhancement initiatives across the School. Despite gaps in strategic oversight of student support (Expectation B4) and trends in complaints and appeals (Expectation B9) deliberate steps taken at school management level and throughout the organisation improve the quality of student learning opportunities. School strategies, notably the Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Learning Resources Strategy clearly focus on improving student learning opportunities. School policies and committees implement School strategies focusing on improvements to learning opportunities.

4.5 Comprehensive programme monitoring and action-planning, coupled with an effective committee system and listening to staff and student opinion, allow the School to identify improvements to student learning opportunities. Although results are available in late July and early August, the School has yet to analyse the NSS results to identify priorities for enhancement or to compare with their own survey data. The team encountered a range of examples of enhancements implemented by the School. Students identified limitations in the old premises, particularly with the learning resources centre. The School response, through the Advisory Board, was to move to larger modern premises with improved learning resources, student facilities and accessibility. Students also requested improved internet access, library and electronic book stock and the School responded by making significant improvements. The 2017 School NSS scores for learning resources are 80.62 per cent compared to a sector-wide score of 85.16 per cent. The School has recognised this and is taking steps to address it.

4.6   Enhancements implemented during the current year are primarily the improvements to physical resources. However, the School also took steps to improve teaching and learning and staff development and research. To attain a high and improving level of teaching, the School intends to achieve Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognition for all its academic staff, with three staff currently involved in the process. Workshops with an external specialist supported staff applications and provided feedback. The peer and management observation of teaching allow staff to share good practice and to apply improvements across curriculum areas. The team heard examples of how one member of staff had been able to improve classroom management through sharing with colleagues and how one curriculum area had applied a wider range of assessment strategies through inter-departmental discussions. Supportive staff development and steps encouraging staff research are further instruments in enhancing student learning opportunities. The International Conference provided a notable stimulus for staff and students to reflect and improve their scholarship.

4.7   The improvements to physical resources have been significant and occupied much discussion in committees. Future enhancement priorities identified by senior management are improved employer engagement, improved IT solutions to streamline processes and continued improvements to teaching and research. The team identified clear improvements to student learning opportunities and routine quality processes to inform the development of enhancement initiatives. However, although senior staff identified enhancement priorities and discussions in committees allow identification and discussion of improvements, there was little explicit and systematic consideration and monitoring of enhancement priorities at a strategic level. Without a specific enhancement strategy, the Advisory Board and Academic Committee did not provide a coherent set of enhancement priorities to disseminate to teaching staff and students as an explicit programme for implementation. The team **recommends** that the School needs to formalise enhancement priorities to secure effective dissemination and implementation of the enhancement strategy.

4.8   The School has a clear commitment to encourage improvements to the quality of learning opportunities. Quality assurance procedures are comprehensive, allowing the School to identify and share good practice and develop clear enhancement initiatives with a recommendation that these should be formalised. The team considers the Expectation to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9　　　In reaching its positive judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. No areas of good practice have been identified.

4.10　　　There is one recommendation that the School should take a more strategic and formalised approach to enhancement and the sharing of good practice. Examples of enhancement provided were mainly in reaction to student feedback and to ensure adequate teaching and learning resources. The team considers that the School should be more proactive in order to implement its strategy and achieve its ambitions

4.11　　　The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the School **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.