Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of London School of Science and Technology Ltd

December 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 Science and Technology (LSST). The review took place from 4 to 7 December 2017 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Mike Bramhall
- Mrs Jane Durant
- Professor Donald Pennington
- Ms Alyson Bird (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 degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **does not meet** UK expectations.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following recommendations.

By August 2018:

- reviews and implements effective academic governance and management structures (Expectation A2.1)
- implement and keep under review a policy and formal procedure for the internal development, modification and approval of programmes (Expectation B1)
- clarify for all stakeholders the process for the selection and admission of students and ensure that interview outcomes are fully documented (Expectation B2)
- clarify the responsibilities for the consideration of external examiner reports at institutional level (Expectation B7)
- revise the policy and procedure for appeals to ensure the requirements of the awarding bodies are met (Expectation B9)
- ensure that all information for staff and students is accurate and trustworthy (Information)
- ensure all staff understand, adhere to and implement the Public Information Policy and Procedure (Information).

By October 2018:

- ensure external examiner reports are routinely used to identify key themes across the provision to inform enhancement (Expectation B7).

By December 2018:

- ensure full recognition of and takes appropriate responsibility for institutional oversight of academic standards (Expectation A2.1)
- develop a strategic approach to learning and teaching including the analysis and evaluation of student data throughout the deliberative committee structure (Expectation B3)
- develop a cycle of routine monitoring and evaluation of student support services to provide effective institutional oversight (Expectation B4)
- ensure all students are fully engaged as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (Expectation B5)

- implement a quality monitoring and review cycle to provide oversight of all higher education provision and ensures consideration of reports at appropriate committees (Expectation B8)
- put in place a policy and procedures to ensure that work placements are implemented securely, managed effectively and regularly reviewed (Expectation B10)
- implement and monitor a strategic approach to enhancement in a systematic and planned manner (Enhancement)
- implement a quality cycle to enable enhancements to be identified, monitored and reviewed for impact and informed by the use of robust and systematically generated data and information (Enhancement).

About the provider

The London School of Science and Technology Ltd (LSST) is a private higher education provider and was founded in 2003. It operates from three campuses. The main campus is in Wembley, London. In 2012 a campus was opened in Luton and in 2014 in Birmingham.

The School's mission is to be recognised as a leading provider of further and higher education that is inclusive, inspiring and free from barriers to learning, and it aims to support individuals of all backgrounds, abilities and aspirations in order to fulfil their potential through learning, achievement and progression.

LSST offers undergraduate programmes in the fields of Business, Computing, Hospitality Management, and Public Health and Social Care or Health Promotion with three awarding partners: Pearson, the University of West London and London Metropolitan University. Approximately 1,000 students are enrolled on programmes in London, about 400 students in Luton and 450 students in Birmingham. All students are funded by the Student Loan Company (SLC).

Since the QAA Review for Educational Oversight in 2013 the higher education provision has been expanded and new campuses have come on stream. For most of its history the School has offered Higher National Diplomas from Pearson. This provision is being phased out and the currently offered HNDs in Business and Computing are not open to any further recruitment. The School first registered students with the University of West London in 2013. It currently offers top-up programmes in Business Studies, and Computing and Information Systems in partnership with UWL. Since 2017 these programmes also run at the Luton campus and the Business Studies programme also in Birmingham. Four additional BA (Hons) programmes with Foundation Years in Business Studies, Health Promotion and Public Health, Travel and Tourism Management, Information Technology Management for Business Studies as well as an MSc in International Marketing are due to start in 2018. In 2017 LSST started to run Foundation Degrees in Business, Hospitality Management, Public Health and Social Care and top-up programmes in Business, Public Health and Health Promotion and Hospitality Management in collaboration with London Metropolitan University.

The expansion in provision and location was accompanied by an increase in staffing and learning resources including online resources. Each campus has its own management team led by an Associate Dean, and a dedicated student support team. The School also revised its academic governance structure. In February 2016 the Department for Education served an improvement notice in respect of unacceptable non-continuation rates of students which was subsequently withdrawn in July 2017.

The last QAA review highlighted one feature of good practice in respect of the extended admissions process which enables a crucial dialogue between staff and students. The School has built on the good practice identified, however, the recording of admissions interview decisions requires further improvement (see recommendation in Expectation B2). The review report also made six desirable recommendations. The School is making gradual progress in respect of student attendance and progression. It has also addressed the recommendations with regard to the writing of programme specifications, peer observation and the provision of academic tutorials. While the School has revised its management and committee structures and completed the programme annual monitoring process, further improvements are required (see recommendations in Expectations A2.1 and B8).

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 Ultimate responsibility for setting academic standards and ensuring that the requirements of the relevant reference points are met lies with the School's awarding partners; Pearson is the awarding organisation for the HNDs in business and computing. The awarding bodies are the University of West London (UWL) for the Business and Computing top-up programmes, and London Metropolitan University (LMU) for the foundation degrees and top-up programmes in business, computing, hospitality, health and social care.

1.2 The universities have established frameworks, assessment regulations and procedures for programme approval and modification, to which the School is subject. HND programmes are developed and awarded through Pearson, who publish the specifications that provide reference points for staff and students for teaching, learning and assessment using Pearson quality processes.

1.3   The awarding bodies ensure that the academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards. This is supported by the School's quality policies and procedures, allowing the Expectation to be met.

1.4   The review team tested the Expectation by examining a range of documents including partnership agreements, programme specifications, validation documents, the School's quality manual, procedures and policy documents, and external examiner reports. The team also met with senior staff, academic and support staff, including representatives from the awarding bodies.

1.5   The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. Although the School does not fully recognise its responsibilities it fulfils its responsibilities to the awarding bodies with regard to securing academic standards as outlined in the partnership agreements and responsibilities checklists. The extension of the partnership agreement by UWL for a further five years, and the LMU approval of foundation degrees and top-ups in 2016 confirms that the awarding partners have confidence in the School's management of threshold standards and that appropriate attention has been paid to FHEQ. This is also confirmed by awarding partners' partnership and monitoring review reports. The review team also found no concerns about threshold academic standards expressed in any of the external examiner reports. However, there is a lack of strategic oversight by the School of academic standards evidenced within the minutes of its committee meetings (see recommendation in Expectation A2.1).

1.6   The awarding partners have ultimate responsibility for academic standards and their regulatory frameworks ensure that the relevant external reference points are adhered to. Although the School does not fully recognise its responsibilities in the strategic oversight of academic standards, it effectively manages its own responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards within its partnership agreements. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7   The School does not have its own academic framework and regulations but conforms to those of its awarding partners who have control over academic credit and assessment regulations as outlined in the partnership agreements. External annual monitoring and partnership review meetings from UWL form the basis for ensuring the School complies with requirements. LMU programmes delivered by the School have not been running long enough to be subject to annual monitoring or periodic review. Pearson conducts annual Academic Management Reviews and external examiner visits to ensure that UK threshold academic standards are met and that the School adheres to monitoring and review requirements.

1.8   The School's Principal, who is also the Head of Quality, holds ultimate management responsibility for academic standards and the quality of the programmes. To effectively oversee the business of the School, a structured committee arrangement and procedures for the conduct of committee meetings has been put into place to cover all aspects of the School's activities. Each committee has its own terms of reference and related policies, procedures or handbooks. The School also provides guidance in its Quality Handbook on the roles of each of its committees.

1.9   Within the academic governance structure responsibility for managing and maintaining academic standards rests with the Academic Board, which is chaired by the Principal and reports into the Executive Committee. Ten committees report into the Academic Board. The Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee (ASQAC) and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), the Assessment Board and Programme Committees are key committees in this reporting structure. The School's processes and procedures, including its academic governance structure would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.10   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the effectiveness of the School's academic governance arrangements, practices and procedures through scrutiny of contractual and other documentation, including the quality and collaborative partner handbooks and internal meeting minutes. The review team also held meetings with teaching and professional support staff and senior staff, including awarding partner representatives.

1.11   The School's mapping of its processes and policies against the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) evidences that the School takes little responsibility the oversight of for academic standards. It states that the setting and maintenance of academic standards are the responsibility of the awarding bodies, showing a limited understanding of its own responsibilities as a higher education provider in this area. This also applies to the use of external and independent expertise and working with others (see Expectations A3.4, B7 and B10). The review team therefore **recommends** that the School ensures full recognition of and takes appropriate responsibility for institutional oversight of academic standards.

1.12   With a relatively small senior management team, the chairing and membership of academic committees overlap. For example, both the Academic Board and the Learning and

Teaching Committee are chaired by the Principal. The Principal is also the Head of Quality, although he does not chair the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee. This concentration of committee-level responsibilities and dual roles within a small senior management team does carry with it some risk. While the review team found no evidence of partiality in the current operation of the governance structure, any changes in personnel or circumstance could give rise to this. The School is aware of this and in mitigation has put senior staff on a number of committees to maintain oversight of quality and standards, sharing issues at the Principal's weekly meetings.

1.13   With regard to the School's oversight of academic standards the review team found that, in general, the minutes of Academic Board do not have actions followed up at subsequent meetings. While the board's agendas have shown some improvement recently by using the terms of reference as agenda item headings, they rarely indicate consideration of reports from subcommittees that report into the board or identify issues from them. The review team also found no evidence of minutes of subcommittees being forwarded to the board for information as required by its terms of reference. Similarly, ASQAC minutes are brief and lacking in detail, with actions not tracked and followed up, and with little discussion of reports received by the committee. The more recent LTAC minutes are moving to a more standardised agenda for each meeting. For example, the latest LTAC minutes do have discussion of an enhancement agenda item on all the relevant committees. However, oversight of academic standards at School level and the enhancement of student learning opportunities does not specifically feature as an agenda item. In general, there is a lack of understanding of the role of academic committees, non-adherence to their terms of reference and overreliance on the Executive Committee and the Principal for academic decision making, leading to unclear reporting lines. The minutes of the academic committees also show no evidence of the systematic generation of robust information which could inform enhancement initiatives at a strategic level (see Expectations B3, B8 and Enhancement). The review team therefore **recommends** that the School reviews and implements effective academic governance and management structures.

1.14   The School fully adheres to the awarding partners' academic frameworks and regulations and has appropriate processes in place to ensure that staff understand and enact their responsibilities at programme level. The School has clear assessment policies and procedures in place, detailed in its Quality Manual, to support the implementation of the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding bodies. UWL academic partnership annual review reports and annual review meetings as well as Pearson's annual Academic Management Review reports confirm that the School adheres to the relevant academic frameworks and regulations. Student handbooks developed by the School acknowledge the academic regulations of their awarding bodies, with links to each of the awarding body's assessment regulations via the School's website and VLE. Students who met the review team confirmed access to this information and which regulations apply to them. Staff attend bi-annual staff development events to ensure that they are familiar with awarding body regulations.

1.15   The correct accurate or appropriate application of the academic regulations is overseen by the Assessment Boards. No credits or awards can be made until confirmed at the appropriate Assessment Board and with the approval and confirmation of external examiners. UWL Business and Computing top-up programmes are considered by the Student Undergraduate Progression and Award Boards which are held at UWL and chaired by a senior member of UWL staff. Programme Leaders attend these meetings and contribute to the decision making. Similar arrangements are in place for LMU provision although at the time of the review no Assessment Board had as yet taken place. Higher National programmes are taken through a School Assessment Board which meets the awarding organisation's requirements for the establishment of such boards. The School's adherence to Pearson academic regulations ensures the transparent award of credits and qualifications.

The School's Assessment Board reports into the Academic Board and the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee, but the Assessment Board minutes are not considered as an agenda item either there or at the Academic Board.

1.16   The School effectively implements the awarding partners' academic frameworks and fully adheres to their academic regulations. There are weaknesses in the School's understanding of its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards, its academic governance structures and their effective operation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.17   Definitive programme records including programme specifications are held in validation documentation, and programme and module handbooks. The partnership agreements between the School, UWL and LMU and the respective responsibility checklists make it clear that the awarding bodies ensure the production of definitive programme documents and programme specifications. The relevant awarding body is also responsible for approving minor modifications. For the Pearson Higher National programmes the School developed distinct Programme Specifications, which contain programme information supplied by the awarding organisation.

1.18   The retention of student records is jointly managed by Programme Leaders, the Exams Office, and the Quality Unit, with access to the Student Management System determined by job role. The School's awarding partners also produce student final transcripts and award certificates. The arrangements in place for the maintenance and use of definitive programme records would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.19   The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising a range of documentation including programme specifications, module descriptors, validation agreements, programme handbooks, awarding body quality handbooks, and internal meeting minutes. The team also met with senior staff, teaching and support staff and students.

1.20   The programme specifications examined by the review team are fit for purpose and reference the educational aims, learning outcomes and assessment methods of each programme. They reflect the expectations of the Quality Code and serve to inform key stakeholders. In one instance there was a discrepancy between the programme specification and the programme handbook in the information supplied to students for the LMU Foundation degree in Business with regards to placements (see Expectation B10). The School has some degree of flexibility for suggesting amendments to arrangements for programmes validated by LMU, with a process in place to modify programme specifications and modules (see Expectation B1).

1.21   Awarding bodies confirm that the School has detailed student records which enable the awarding bodies to provide accurate transcripts and award certificates.

1.22   The School and its awarding partners ensure that definitive records of programmes and qualifications are maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

1.23   The School delivers programmes that have been designed and approved by its awarding partners, which have responsibility for ensuring that national academic standards are met. The School has no responsibility for programme design other than through the selection of units or modules, and the creation of assessments for programmes awarded by LMU and Pearson.

1.24   The awarding partners have policies and procedures in place to monitor that academic standards at LSST are fully aligned with their requirements. Their processes for programme and module design, and approval ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.25   The review team tested the Expectation by examining contractual agreements and responsibility checklists and the outcomes of programme approvals by awarding bodies for LSST to operate and deliver programmes of the awarding partners. The team also met with senior staff, academic staff and professional support staff.

1.26   LSST claims to have a formal system for the approval of programmes and their constituent modules where the School has some delegated authority from LMU and Pearson. However, there is no evidence that the system is used. The School relies entirely on the awarding partners in this respect. This is confirmed in the School's mapping of its practice against the Expectations of the Quality Code. The lack of a formal approval procedure in the context of growth of programmes to be offered indicates that the School is not able to assess in advance of an approval event whether it is able to meet required academic standards of the awarding body (see Expectation B1).

1.27   The approval processes by the awarding partners give assurance that academic standards are set at an appropriate level and that programmes align with LMU and UWL's academic regulatory framework and Pearson's requirements. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

1.28   The awarding partners are responsible for checking the achievement of learning outcomes and the alignment with national standards through their external examination recruiting and reporting arrangements. Assessments are provided to LSST for programmes awarded by UWL. The School sets its own assessments for programmes awarded by LMU and Pearson. Procedures to check assessments are determined by the awarding bodies and organisation. Prior to being issued to students, assignments for LMU programmes are subject to the University's approval.

1.29   Following internal verification or double marking by the School, standards of achievement and the alignment to national standards are checked through the universities' and Pearson's procedures. In addition, the School works with its partner organisations to ensure academic standards meet their requirements through partnership reviews, link tutor visits, and ongoing informal communication. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.30   In testing this Expectation, the review team examined a range of documentary evidence, including external examiner reports, programme specifications and handbooks, academic policies, and relevant committee meeting minutes. The team also met with senior and academic staff.

1.31   The School provides comprehensive and clear guidance to staff with responsibility for assessment. This covers the awarding partners' requirements for the achievement of learning outcomes, assessment, and the verification of assessment briefs and results. Staff are familiar with these requirements and apply procedures appropriately.

1.32   The School operates within the academic frameworks of its awarding partners making appropriate use of its programme and module or unit specifications. Similarly, arrangements for the assurance and confirmation of assessment decisions and the award of credit align with the academic frameworks of its awarding partners. Marking and moderation of student work is carried out appropriately. Assessment results for university programmes are confirmed through formal examination boards with external examiner input run by awarding bodies. For Pearson programmes the School effectively operates its own examination boards, the outcomes from which are confirmed during Pearson external examiner visits. Assessment processes are also reviewed during Pearson's Annual Management Review process.

1.33   The School in conjunction with its awarding partners has effective systems in place to ensure that the award of credit and qualifications is made when achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. The external examining arrangements ensure that UK threshold standards and those of the awarding bodies' and Pearson are achieved. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is

low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.34   The monitoring and review of programmes and the achievement of UK threshold academic standards is a shared responsibility between the School and its awarding partners with ultimate responsibility lying with the latter. The policies and procedures that the School is required to follow are set out in awarding partners' quality handbooks and the School's Quality Manual. Pearson conducts annual Academic Management Reviews and external examiner visits to ensure that UK threshold academic standards are met and that the School adheres to monitoring and review requirements.

1.35   The production of annual monitoring reports for university provision is the School's responsibility. The School produces module and programme monitoring reports for the UWL and Pearson programmes that it delivers and will also produce reports for LMU programmes on an annual basis in accordance with its programme evaluation and monitoring procedure. The processes in place for the monitoring and review of programmes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.36   In testing this Expectation, the review team scrutinised monitoring and review procedures and relevant committee meeting minutes, programme monitoring reports and reviews. The team also held meetings with staff including awarding body representatives, and students.

1.37   The School adheres to the requirements of UWL and Pearson for monitoring and periodic review. The School produces adequate annual monitoring and programme evaluation and monitoring reports. It considers these reports at Programme Committee and Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee meetings as well as at the Principal's weekly meetings. However, the minutes of these meetings are insufficiently detailed to ascertain whether reports are considered in a robust manner. UWL monitoring and review reports are also considered at joint partnership annual review meetings. At the time of the review LMU programmes had not been running long enough to be subject to annual monitoring or periodic review.

1.38   The School produces monitoring and review reports as required by it awarding partners which address the achievement of UK threshold academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.39   The responsibility for engaging appropriate external and independent expertise for setting academic standards through programme approval and periodic review rests with the School's awarding partners. The School's main source of external and independent expertise in maintaining academic standards are the external examiners appointed by its awarding partners. The roles and responsibilities of external examiners including consideration of reports are clearly defined in Pearson and university documentation. The School expects their reports to be used as a source of evidence for other quality assurance activities. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.40   In testing this Expectation, the review team considered a range of documentation relating to the use of external and independent expertise, including Quality Code mapping, and external examiner and programme monitoring and review reports. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff, including representatives from the two awarding bodies.

1.41   The School's understanding of its responsibilities with regard to using external and independent expertise is limited. The School maintains that full responsibility for this Expectation is held by its awarding partners (see recommendation in Expectation A 2.1)

1.42   The School follows the awarding partners' expectations for the use of individual external examiner reports. Recommendations and comments from their reports feed into the annual programme monitoring and review process. External examiner reports are also received at numerous committees throughout the School's governance structure but an institutional-level analysis is missing (see recommendation in Expectation B7).

1.43   Although understanding of its responsibilities for engaging with external and independent expertise is limited, the School has mechanisms in place to make use of external examiner reports. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.44   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.45   All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low for six. One Expectation has a moderate risk and attracted two recommendations with regard to the School's understanding of its responsibilities for the oversight of academic standards and effective academic governance. These are located in Expectation A2.1 but the recommendations in Expectations B3, B5, B7, B8 and Enhancement are also relevant here. There are no affirmations or good practice in this judgement area.

1.46   The review team concludes the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The School's programmes are largely designed, developed and approved by the School's awarding partners. With Pearson and LMU provision the School does play a minor role in programme design. For the Pearson HND programmes the School selects appropriate units for delivery according to the awarding organisation's rules of combination and develops its own programme specifications based on Pearson's generic qualification specifications. The School is also responsible for designing the teaching and learning approach. For LMU programmes the School modifies the University's programme and module specifications to align them with the delivery of the programme at the School, which are then approved by the University.

2.2   The School states it has processes in place for the design, development and approval of programmes, using its committee structures for the approval of new courses but relying on the processes of its awarding body universities for programme design, development and approval. The Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee has responsibility for approving all matters to do with validation of new programmes on behalf of Academic Board. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3   In testing this Expectation, the review team evaluated the effectiveness of processes and procedures through examining programme approval and validation documentation and relevant committee minutes. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff at the School, awarding body representatives and students.

2.4   The School complies with the programme approval processes of the universities and with the programme design requirements of Pearson. The processes for the design, development and approval of programmes by the awarding bodies are operating effectively with appropriate School input where required. Pearson reports that the School discharges its responsibilities satisfactorily.

2.5   There is no evidence that the School uses its academic committee structures for the approval of those programme elements it has responsibility for. This applies to both the customised Pearson programme specifications and the modifications made to LMU programmes and modules prior to approval by the University. Staff explained that a working group consisting of Programme and Module Leaders made modifications to LMU programmes and modules and that standardisation meetings compared various modules. No records of these activities were kept. Minutes of the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee do not evidence any discussion or approval of these matters as required from its terms of reference. In view of this, the review team **recommends** that the School implements and keeps under review a policy and formal procedure for the internal development, modification and approval of programmes.

2.6   The School adheres to programme approval requirements of its awarding partners and the review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met. However, given that

the School does not follow its processes for the internal approval of programme elements it is responsible for the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.7   The School is responsible for the recruitment, selection and admissions of its students, in line with the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies. The School maintains an Admissions Policy, Procedure and Regulations document which sets out the requirements for entry to its higher education programmes and the application process. The document is reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee on an annual basis.

2.8   Applicants who enquire about studying at the School are invited to attend a compulsory assessment day which consists of an academic skills tests in Numeracy and English, completion of an online application, and an academic interview. Students who do not hold a level 3 qualification or equivalent are required to undertake a screening for accreditation of prior experience (SAPE) assessment which is considered as part of the academic interview. Students are also required to provide a range of documentation in support of their application. The Admissions Review Panel is responsible for making admissions decisions which are then communicated to applicants directly via their online application account.

2.9   The School uses its website, open days and the prospectus to support its recruitment activity and to provide information, advice and guidance to prospective students. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.10   The review team tested the School's approach to recruitment, selection and admission through meetings with senior staff, staff responsible for the admissions process, and students. The review team also reviewed documents relating to admissions, including the admissions policy, procedure and regulations, information and guidance available to staff, redacted admissions interviews and associated documentation and minutes of relevant panel meetings.

2.11   The School has appropriate admissions and selection policies and procedures in place which it implements satisfactorily. Individual elements of the admissions process are clearly detailed within the Admissions Policy and accompanying flowchart, however, instances in which a second interview would be required are less clear. For example, staff explained that a second interview, in addition to the academic interview, might be used in special cases and reported that such cases include applicants with a declared disability or a criminal conviction. The process for a second interview in these two circumstances is clearly documented in the admissions policy document. However, other possible instances in which a special case interview might be required are not defined or documented in the policy or any other School documentation. The Admissions Policy makes reference to an Admissions Panel for making admissions decisions, whereas in practice it is the Admissions Review Panel that makes the final decision. The Admissions Panel has a different remit, focusing on monitoring the operation of the admissions procedure itself.

2.12   Students with whom the review team met used a range of sources to decide upon LSST as their place of study including the website, speaking directly with tutors at the College and through word of mouth. They confirmed that they were required to complete an

online application prior to being invited to the assessment day, which included an academic interview and an academic skills test.

2.13   Template admissions interview forms are routinely used by staff both for academic interviews and second interviews where required, ensuring consistency in the approach to recommending admissions outcomes to the Admissions Review Panel. In cases where a second interview has taken place, the outcomes of both interviews are simultaneously considered by the Admissions Review Panel. An examination of completed admissions interview forms found that the final recommendation to the Admissions Review Panel was clearly documented, the rationale for this recommendation, however, was not. Furthermore, the minutes of the Admissions Review Panel revealed a systematic review of each composite component of the admissions process, that is outcomes of the academic skills test, SAPE and interview, however, the rationale for the final admissions decision itself was also not documented within the minutes. In view of these findings, the review team **recommends** that the School clarifies for all stakeholders the process for the selection and admission of students and ensures that interview outcomes are fully documented.

2.14   Applicants who are rejected are entitled to feed back on the reasons for that rejection but must request such feedback through the Admissions Office. The School maintains a specific policy for appeals and complaints in relation to admissions decisions, which is detailed within the Admission Policy, Procedure and Regulations document. Students are provided with a template form to make their complaint or appeal. There is a discrepancy in the information provided to admission staff and the policy for appeals against admissions decisions (see Information). Admissions staff with who met the review team were fully aware of the opportunity for applicants to make an appeal or complaint as stated in the policy, however, the Admissions Staff Handbook explicitly states that appeals against admissions decisions are not permitted. The School clarified that admissions staff training does make it clear that appeals against admissions decisions are permissible.

2.15   The School regularly reviews it admissions processes and undertakes an admissions satisfaction survey, the results of which are processed by the Admissions Office and discussed by the Admissions Panel. In addition, the School's Admissions and Marketing Panel reviews the quality of admission; fairness, consistency and transparency in admissions practices; and identifies best practice. Actions arising from these activities feed into the School's master action plan. It was not clear though how this information is used for enhancement (see Enhancement).

2.16   Notwithstanding the recommendation made above, the review team concludes that the School has appropriate processes and policies in place to allow for the fair and transparent recruitment, selection and admission of students. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.17   The School's mission is 'to be recognised as a leading provider of further and higher education that is inclusive, inspiring and free from barriers to learning'. The Learning and Teaching Handbook is the definitive document for teachers setting out the School's approach to learning, teaching and assessment. It outlines the School's expectations and provides introductions to numerous approaches to learning. Policies and documents regarding staff recruitment, development and appraisal support the provision of effective learning and teaching. The Employees' Handbook outlines expectations and a code of conduct for teaching staff.

2.18   Overall responsibility for learning and teaching rests with the Principal. All academic staff are expected to take devolved responsibility for their own practice. Programme Committees, LTAC, ASQAC, and the Academic Board hold responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of learning and teaching, and programme delivery. This responsibility is expected to be discharged through evidence gathering from key processes relating to learning and teaching such as student feedback, student satisfaction, and graded and peer review of teaching. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.19   In testing this Expectation, the review team examined a range of documentation including policies related to teaching and learning, handbooks, relevant committee minutes, teaching observation reports, student outcomes data and student survey results. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff, and students.

2.20   Academic staff are suitably qualified and have appropriate subject qualifications to teach at the relevant subject level. During recruitment the qualifications of teaching staff delivering university programmes are checked, and subsequently sent to the awarding bodies for approval. The School employs a robust standardised interview process that covers approaches to teaching, the management of students, equality of opportunity, as well as subject expertise. Following appointment new staff receive a comprehensive induction by the Human Resources Team and Programme Leaders. Staff confirm they found the induction helpful in supporting them to teach at appropriate levels by matching their work load with their prior experience, and in providing shadowing opportunities and experienced staff as mentors.

2.21   There is a requirement for all teaching staff to take part in annual performance reviews, carried out by relevant line managers. This includes an interim additional performance review for new teachers to allow for early intervention when necessary. Staff appraisal forms demonstrate inclusion of the identification of continuing professional development (CPD) needs within this process.

2.22   LSST recognises staff as a valuable resource and invests significantly in developing its teachers. The Staff Development Policy demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting staff development activities for both full and part-time staff. The School hosts a number of CPD workshops related to learning, teaching and assessment. In addition, teaching staff are supported financially in gaining fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. All staff are

expected to have achieved qualified teacher status within two years of employment. Staff also attend development sessions provided by UWL, LMU, and Pearson.

2.23   The annual cycle of management-led graded observations and teacher peer reviews ensures the regular monitoring of the quality of teaching. Associate Deans and Programme Leaders observe all teaching staff annually using the previous OFSTED grading criteria. Observations are recorded and discussed with individual staff members and at the LTAC. Samples of the graded reports seen at the review were variable in terms of content quality and quantity. Reports are maintained by the Quality Unit and read by the Principal. The evidence relating to peer observations indicates that teachers provide colleagues with detailed and informative feedback on teaching skills and subject knowledge. Students evaluate the quality of teaching and learning through surveys, student representatives, and in Programme Committee meetings. In discussions, students were positive about their lecturers in terms of competency, training, knowledge, qualifications, and approaches to learning. Students also recognised actions that have been taken to address underperforming teachers in response to their complaints.

2.24   Resources to support learning and teaching are satisfactory. Students benefit from access to EBSCO, School and the universities' libraries, lecturers' notes and resources, and the VLE. Students recognise the benefits the VLE offers in providing access to learning resources and materials, in particular the webinars that staff post. Senior staff and students confirmed improvements to resources are being made in response to student or staff requests and awarding body requirements. There is a clear process of resource allocation. Senior managers are responsible for budgeting and approving resource requests.

2.25   The School produces some data on student attendance and performance. However, other than through module, course leader, and programme reporting, it is unclear how detailed data are routinely and rigorously interrogated at appropriate levels throughout School committees. While the data gathered from the management and peer review observation processes are collated and presented to the LTAC, the School does not systematically analyse and use these data to inform senior managers of cross-School themes or issues. The School has, for example, issues relating to student retention and attendance (see paragraph 2.32), and there is no evidence that these are being adequately monitored and addressed at senior level.

2.26   The Learning and Teaching Handbook contains detailed guidance for teachers, for example, on professional codes, assessment, CPD, and theories of learning but the School does not have a clearly articulated learning and teaching strategy that sets out priorities for development to assure and enhance learning opportunities and the student experience. When tested in meetings, staffs understanding of strategy in relation to developing learning and teaching was limited and confined to specific improvements. Minutes of the LTAC do not provide substantive evidence that the opportunities offered for development and enhancement are identified or acted upon.

2.27   As a consequence of this, and the shortcomings identified in the use of data (see paragraph 2.32), the review team **recommends** that the School develops a strategic approach to learning and teaching including the scrutiny of student data throughout the deliberative committee structure.

2.28   In consideration of the School's procedures, and of its learning and teaching resources, including staff, the team concludes that the Expectation is met. Current approaches to data analysis and the strategic leadership of learning and teaching need further development, therefore 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

2.29   The School recognises the need to provide good levels of support for its students, many of whom are mature, returning learners. Its stated vision and objectives emphasise the importance it places on supporting students in their endeavours to fulfil their potential, and on providing the resources to enable students to do so. A wide range of support mechanisms and resources are available for students including orientation and academic induction programmes, personal tutors, academic counselling and support, student support services, a learning resource centre, careers advice, a work placement unit, and financial services. Various committees are responsible for the oversight of different aspects of the support services and resources. These include the LTAC, Programme Committees, the Attendance Panel and the Personal Tutor Panel. Through programme evaluation, monitoring and review processes Programme Leaders monitor tutorial arrangements. Students and their representatives give feedback on the quality of support and the student support services through surveys, Programme Committees, and focus group meetings. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.30   In testing this Expectation, the review team scrutinised a range of documentation including the terms of reference, membership and minutes of relevant the deliberative committees, samples of resources and inventories, induction and orientation programmes, and the student handbook. The team also held meetings with academic and support staff, and students.

2.31   Policies and handbooks detailing student support arrangements are accessible to students on the VLE. Significant, recent investment has been effective in upgrading and broadening the range of services offered to students across all three campuses. Discussions with staff and students indicated that due consideration is given to student feedback and requests for improvements. Although a small number of students raised concerns about some of the campuses' facilities, they recognised the initiatives the School is undertaking to improve them. In general, students are very complimentary about staff availability and the high levels of support they receive from staff, and the help given by the Careers Service.

2.32   Induction and orientation arrangements provide a thorough introduction to and transition into the School and programmes of study. The School has recently introduced a two-week orientation programme which follows the one-day induction during students' first week at the School. The orientation programme engages students in essential personal and study skills as well as in group work, problem solving, and a self-assessment of personal and academic skills. Key information such as the use of the VLE and legislative responsibilities are included. Orientation content is differentiated by awarding body needs and by mode of study. Students confirmed they found their induction comprehensive. The School uses a mid-term student survey to monitor the quality of induction. Staff attribute increased levels of student engagement and confidence, and a higher number of students who ask for academic support to the introduction of the induction and orientation programme.

2.33   Although improving, poor student attendance continues to be an issue for the School at all campuses. Reports show an attendance average of 73 per cent. In September 2017, attendance warning notices were issued to 122 students and some 60 students had been withdrawn in November 2017 due to poor or non-attendance. The School has

comprehensive systems in place to monitor student attendance and support individual students. A range of staff including the Attendance Officer, staff from Registry, Personal Tutors, and Programme Leaders are involved in the process. Although Programme Leaders receive weekly programme attendance reports, in general the attendance monitoring and reporting process via the School's committee structures makes limited use of real time information. The School states it is unable to produce trend data for attendance and the Data Officer provides reports for committees as requested. There is little evidence in committee minutes of detailed scrutiny and analysis of attendance data and monitoring of the effectiveness of actions being taken to improve this (see recommendations in Expectations B3 and Enhancement).

2.34   The Academic Support Centre is working effectively, and support is offered on all campuses. The review team noted the School's commitment to identifying students' individual support needs and the provision of differentiated approaches to support. In line with identified needs, students may be referred to attend compulsory academic support workshops, or they may volunteer attendance. Workshops cover a range of topics pertinent to higher studies, such as statistical analysis, plagiarism, and Harvard referencing. Students confirmed they feel well supported.

2.35   The timetabled, personal tutorial system is an effective and well-structured support mechanism for students. The roles and responsibilities of Personal Tutors are clearly articulated in an annual report that is aligned to the Expectation of Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement. Lecturers are trained and well supported through time allowance in their extensive tutorial role. They monitor academic progress, support students in voluntary personal development planning, write progress reports, monitor at risk student indicators, signpost students to central and external services for a range of professional help, and identify and report on radicalism. Changes the School has made to the tutorial system are having a positive impact on student attendance and retention rates.

2.36   Personal development planning (PDP) involves the use of students' initial self-assessments to identify goals for their programmes of study and development needs. Students and tutors have access to this information via the VLE. Evidence examined by the team indicates that the early initiatives in relation to PDP implemented so far by the School provide detailed information to underpin future tutorial sessions.

2.37   Support for students on careers and employability is considerable. Students have opportunities to receive help with writing CVs, to engage in a Dragon's Den activity and with a range of employers during guest speaker events and attend careers and employment fairs The recently created Student Employability, Careers and Work Placement Unit further demonstrates commitment to developing students' careers and employability.

2.38   Minutes of the LTAC, Programme committees, and the Personal Tutor Panel confirm that appropriate consideration is given to the provision and development of services to support students' development and progress. The review team also heard that support services evaluate themselves, but it is unclear whether this is a planned and formal process. Examples given by staff indicate that changes to student support arrangements are primarily made in response to student feedback or individual staff's suggestions. For example, a new policy relating to pregnant students and students who are parents had been initiated by a staff member and changes to the Academic Support Centre had been made in response to student feedback. There is lack of evidence to confirm that the School systematically evaluates the effectiveness of its student support arrangements and uses this as a mechanism for planned strategic development (see Enhancement). The team therefore **recommends** that the School develops a cycle of routine monitoring and evaluation of student support services to provide effective institutional oversight.

2.39   The School has a comprehensive system of student support in place. Although support services are not systematically monitored and evaluated to provide effective institutional oversight, aspects of their operation are monitored through the School's committee structure and improvements to support arrangements and services are made. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.40   In its Student Engagement Policy the School outlines how it will engage with students both at programme level and as a collective higher education student body. Further details can be found in its Quality Handbook. The School has a dedicated Students' Union with a President and two Officers. Students are informed of the Students' Union and its purpose at induction. The President has regular meetings with the Principal. At programme level, there is an established system of student representatives who attend Programme Committees.

2.41   Student representatives are also elected to the Students' Union Council, the supreme decision-making body of the Union. The President and the two Students' Union Officers are also members. The council is supported by a Student Union Coordinator who is a member of staff. The Students' Union Committee is the principal body representing its members' views and interests to the School. It is chaired by the Students' Union Coordinator. Student representatives are also members of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and Academic Board.

2.42   Internal student surveys, module evaluations, the results of the National Student Survey and focus groups provide opportunities for all students to provide feedback to the School. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.43   In considering this Expectation, the review team examined documentation such as the Student Engagement Policy, student feedback mechanisms and their outcomes and the minutes and action plans from associated committees. The team also met with students and their representatives and staff.

2.44   All students have a variety of opportunities to provide feedback on their experience. Feedback is routinely considered within module and programme evaluation and monitoring reports. Students also confirmed that they may provide feedback through informal means in discussion with staff.

2.45   Student representatives are elected annually by their peers and receive guidance and training on their roles and responsibilities. To acknowledge their contribution to the overall student experience they receive a Certificate of recognition from the School. Programme Committee minutes demonstrate that student representatives attend meetings regularly. However, their contributions are limited to the provision of feedback on the student experience. Students with whom the review team met felt that the student representative system was generally working well.

2.46   While the review team saw an example of email feedback to student representatives following a Students' Union Committee meeting, students who met the review team commented that the School does not always communicate the actions taken in response to their feedback at Programme Committee meetings but were able to provide examples where they had seen the impact of their feedback. For example, the School had taken action to address underperformance in teaching staff in response to student feedback and improved the provision of computers across campuses. The School has recently introduced 'You Said, We Did' posters to communicate better to all students the actions it has taken in response to their feedback.

2.47   The governance documents states that the Students' Union Committee reports to the School Board, Executive Committee and Academic Board. However, the minutes of these boards and committees do not demonstrate that matters arising from the Students' Union Committee are being reported to or discussed by them (see recommendation in Expectation A2.1). In one instance the Students' Union Committee was listed as an agenda item for the Academic Board, but no discussion was recorded in the minutes. Staff reported that the minutes of the Students' Union Committee are shared with the School. The Quality Unit provides a response to any issues arising and resultant actions are listed within the master action plan. It is unclear, however, where progress on actions from the plan is routinely monitored as staff articulated different procedures.

2.48   Students' opportunities to make meaningful contributions at strategic level to the enhancement of their learning experience are limited. Representation of the student voice at institutional level is through membership of the Academic Board and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee. Whereas student representatives regularly attend LTAC meetings, minutes of the Academic Board show that students do not attend these meetings. As for Programme Committees students' contribution to LTAC meetings remains confined to the provision of feedback.

2.49   The review team heard of multiple examples where policy development was undertaken by the School without input from students, pointing to missed opportunities to engage students in a meaningful way at strategic level. For example, the Student Engagement Policy itself was approved and is reviewed by the Executive Committee, a body which does not include student representatives as members. Similarly, the policy for pregnant students, created in light of a perceived gap, was developed without formal input from student representatives or the Students' Union. Although some informal consultation took place with students, students for whom the policy would apply were not involved in its development. The proposal for the recent restructure of students' academic support was developed without consultation with students and approval was given by the Principal without any student input. In view of these findings, the review team **recommends** that the School ensures that students are fully engaged as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.50   The School provides sufficient opportunities for students to engage individually and collectively in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The extent to which students can engage as partners is, however, limited. The current arrangements enable the School to hear and respond to the student voice. Overall, the review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.51   The School's responsibilities for assessment vary for each awarding partner. For Pearson programmes, the School both designs and grades unit assessments and follows Pearson's requirements for the internal verification of assessment briefs and assessment results. For programmes validated by LMU the School designs and sets assignments which are internally moderated before submission to the University for external moderation. The UWL supplies the School with assignment briefs to be given to students. The School marks and internally verifies assessments for both LMU and UWL programmes which are then submitted to the respective university for external moderation and inspection by the university-appointed external examiners.

2.52   The School has its own Assessment Regulations and Procedures which include procedures for academic misconduct. There is also an Internal Verification Policy. These largely govern the assessment of students on Pearson programmes. The Assessment Regulations and Procedures also contain reference to the marking and moderation of assessments for LMU and UWL programmes and link to the universities' academic regulations which govern the assessment of students on these programmes. The School's Quality Handbook provides guidelines with respect to the aims of assessment, submission of assessed work and return to students, reasonable adjustments and feedback to students. The handbook also provides guidance on the internal verification of assignments and assessment decisions, moderation of coursework and the role of external examiners. The School follows its awarding partners' rules and procedures for the recognition of prior learning. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.53   In testing this Expectation, the review team considered a range of documentation related to assessment, including the School's and the awarding partners' assessment policies and regulations, the School's Quality Handbook, examples of assignment briefs, external examiner reports, and programme and module handbooks. The team also met with staff and students to discuss the operation of assessment processes and the provision of feedback to students.

2.54   The School adheres to and complies with its awarding partners' academic regulations and procedures for assessment. For awards made by Pearson this is evidenced through Academic Management Review and external examiner reports, which confirm adherence to the requirements for grading of assessed work and internal verification of both assignment briefs and assessment decisions, and the provision of feedback to students. Assignment briefs are clearly written and reflect the appropriate unit learning outcomes and aims. The Examination Board for Pearson programmes is constituted in accordance with the awarding organisations' requirements and operates as intended. It ratifies the grades for unit assessments and the requirements for the overall award.

2.55   The School also conforms to the UWL guidelines for assessment as evidenced in the minutes of the Academic Partnership Annual Review and external examiner reports. The quality and quantity of feedback to students is positively commented on by the external examiner for the Business top-up programme. Staff from the School attend examination

boards coordinated by the University.

2.56   LMU programmes are delivered by the School from 2017 and the modules are delivered across terms over a year long period. In consequence, at the time of the review the assessment cycle had not been completed and no conclusions could be reached in relation to the effectiveness of the assessment process.

2.57   Students report overall satisfaction with the assessment process commenting that assignments are appropriate and clearly written. Feedback is helpful in identifying strengths and how to improve, and the School's rules and approach to plagiarism are clearly understood.

2.58   Students submit their assignments through plagiarism-detection software and are fully briefed on its use and how to avoid academic malpractice. The use of one-to-one sessions for formative assessment, apart from helping students with assessment preparation, also helps to ensure that the work is the student's own. The School recently introduced webinars to help students with preparation of their assessments and improve assessment literacy.

2.59   The School holds regular best practice sessions where teaching staff share good practice in unit assessment for Pearson programmes. Assignment briefs and marking guidelines are discussed with improvement identified for future use.

2.60   The School has clear and robust assessment procedures and processes and fully adheres to the awarding partners' assessment requirements. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.61   Responsibility for the definition of the role of the School's external examiners, their selection, and recruitment rests with the awarding partners. The School is required to follow the regulations of the awarding partners and is responsible for responding to external examiner reports and implementing recommendations as necessary. Processes are in place for the consideration of external examiner reports. The implementation of any recommendations made in the reports is monitored through the master action plan. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.62   The review team tested the application of these arrangements by scrutinising a range of documents including the Quality Handbook, the Internal Verification Handbook, external examiners' reports, relevant committee minutes, the School's master action plan, Pearson Academic Management Reports, and records of annual partnership reviews with UWL. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff, representatives from partner universities, and students.

2.63   In its mapping of practice against the Expectations of the Quality Code the School states that it has no responsibility in respect of this Expectation (see recommendation in Expectation A2.1). Despite a limited understanding of its responsibilities, arrangements for the receipt and consideration of external examiner reports at programme level are clear. Reports for UWL provision are disseminated by the University to Programme Leaders who contribute to the formal response of the University to the examiners. Although not yet operational, this process will also apply to awards conferred by LMU. For Pearson Higher Nationals the Quality Nominee receives external examiner reports within the School which are then disseminated to Programme Leaders. Students confirmed they have access to the reports via the VLE and at Programme Committee meetings.

2.64   Programme Leaders review all external examiner reports, and routinely identify any required actions in Programme Committee meetings and during the programme evaluation monitoring process. There is also some discussion of external examiner reports at School level within committees, but it is unclear which committees hold ultimate responsibility for this. The current approach to the review of external examiner reports at institutional level focuses primarily on individual reports and awarding organisations. The opportunity to identify and report on key themes to influence improvement across all provision is missed (see Enhancement Expectation). Consequently, the review team **recommends** that the School ensures external examiner reports are routinely used to identify key themes across the provision to inform enhancement.

2.65   Actions arising from external examiner reports are logged on the School's master action plan. The latest version includes actions from reports from UWL and Pearson reports. Although actions are updated on the plan, it is not clear how and where progress is systematically monitored throughout the School's committee structure. Staff described different procedures including review during informal meetings with no written records, monitoring by the Principal and Head of Quality, review at the ASQAC and LTAC and follow-up by the Quality Unit with committee chairs, and circulation of the plan to the Executive Committee. In light of this, the team **recommends** that the School clarifies the responsibilities for the consideration of external examiner reports at institutional level.

2.66   The School has systems in place for the effective receipt of and response to

external examiners' reports that align with the awarding partners' requirements, but existing opportunities to use external examiner reports to identify enhancements are not used. Clarity is lacking with regard to the responsibility for the consideration of external examiner reports at institutional level. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met, but the associated level of risk is moderate due to the identified shortcomings

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.67   The School has varying responsibilities for programme monitoring and review depending on the awarding partner. Pearson requires the School to monitor and periodically review programmes and undertakes an annual Academic Management Review to assure itself that the School discharges its responsibilities appropriately. For UWL and LMU provision the School is required to produce module and programme monitoring reports. UWL also conducts an annual academic partnership review which includes a review of annual monitoring. The School has procedures in place for the monitoring of modules and programmes. These largely govern the monitoring of Pearson programmes, but the School has also adopted its module monitoring process for UWL programmes.

2.68   Periodic review of programmes is primarily the responsibility of the awarding partners to which the School is expected to contribute to. UWL programmes and the management of the partnership are subject to periodic review every five years. LMU conducts periodic reviews every six years subject to satisfactory annual reports.

2.69   The School's academic governance structure sets out the responsibilities of academic committees with respect to programme monitoring and review, including the Academic Board, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee, Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee and Programme Committees. A summary of the outcomes and any action points from module monitoring and review reports are considered at Programme Committee meetings and presented for information at both ASQAC and LTAC. Outcomes and actions from module monitoring also feed into Programme Evaluation and Monitoring Reports (PEMR) produced by Programme Leaders.

2.70   Programme evaluation and monitoring takes place termly and involves a meeting between the Principal and the Programme Leader. Annual reports from Programme Leaders are considered by ASQAC, LTAC and Programme Committees. Summarising the strengths and areas for development across all programmes the Principal compiles an overall Centre Evaluation and Monitoring Report. This report is scrutinised in detail by the senior management and will be a prominent agenda item of the Academic Board, Management Board and Students' Union Committee. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.71   In testing this Expectation, the review team considered module and programme monitoring procedures, the terms of reference and minutes of relevant committees and examined module and programme monitoring reports. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff and students.

2.72   The School effectively implements its procedures for the monitoring of modules and programmes for Pearson and for the UWL programmes. For LMU provision the first monitoring cycle has yet to take place and no reports were available at the time of the review. Module monitoring reports, produced according to the School's template, provide useful statistical data and identify areas for improvement. Programme Leaders produce annual monitoring reports for each programme according to the School's template and the reports seen by the team demonstrate that they are informed by module monitoring. They also comment on statistical information concerning module pass rates, report on progress

with actions from the previous academic year, comment on external examiner reports and identify areas of good practice. Programme Committees appropriately consider programme and module monitoring reports, as stated in their terms of reference. The review team was informed that programme monitoring reports are also considered at the Principal's meetings with Programme Leaders. However, the minutes of these meetings are insufficiently detailed to demonstrate in depth considerations of these reports.

2.73   The School does not have a sufficiently robust process to maintain oversight across programmes, campuses and awarding partners. At School level, the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee considers individual programme and module evaluation reports. ASQAC minutes demonstrate that some consideration is given to reports, but the minutes do not make it entirely clear which reports the committee has received. They are also not detailed enough to provide an insight into any discussions that took place. For the Academic Board there is no evidence of the receipt of the overarching centre monitoring report from the Principal as outlined in the monitoring procedure. In view of the complexity of the higher education provision with delivery of programmes ranging from Higher National Diplomas to Foundation Degrees and BA (Hons) top-ups at three campuses and from different awarding partners, the review team **recommends** that the School implements a monitoring and quality review cycle to provide effective oversight of all higher education provision and ensures consideration of reports at appropriate committees.

2.74   While regular and systematic processes for monitoring and review operate effectively at programme level in accord with the awarding partners' requirements, there are weaknesses at provider level in the oversight of academic provision. The review team concludes that overall the Expectation is met, but due to the identified shortcomings the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.75   The School's formal process for handling complaints is set out in the Student Complaints Procedure, and for appeals in the Academic Appeals Policy. The procedures apply to all students. The procedures include the grounds for making a complaint or appeal, the timescales for handling them, and details of which staff are to be involved at the respective stages. The complaints procedures and the appeals policy are made available to students and staff on the website and through the VLE. Students are also informed of them in the student handbook and at induction. Appeals and complaints forms re provided to support students in their application. The School encourages informal discussion of complaints to seek early resolution. The School maintains a separate process for considering appeals against admissions decisions which is outlined in the Admissions Policy, Procedure and Regulations document. An Academic Appeals Panel considers appeals applications across all awarding bodies. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.76   The review team tested the School's approach to academic appeals and complaints through meetings with students, professional support staff, senior and teaching staff. The team also consulted documentation, including the associated policies for complaints and appeals, the student handbook, the agreements with the awarding partners and redacted student complaints and appeals.

2.77   There are clear processes in place for student complaints, which are fully understood by students and staff. The policy and procedure for students outlines the opportunity of recourse to the respective degree awarding bodies and the OIA and operates in line with the respective partnership agreements with LMU and UWL. The School is required to notify UWL immediately upon receipt of a complaint; and the University subsequently monitors cases notified to it as part of the annual review of the partnership. For LMU provision, any complaints received will be reported on an annual basis. The policy and procedures also work effectively for Pearson awards. The most recent Pearson Academic Management review report confirmed that the School has an appropriate system for informing Pearson of any complaints. Students confirmed that they knew where to find the relevant procedures, understood the difference between a complaint and an appeal, and that they were able to escalate a complaint to the degree awarding bodies should they remain dissatisfied.

2.78   The process for considering academic appeals works effectively for Pearson awards where the internal Academic Appeals Policy is used. The most recent Pearson Academic Management Review report confirms that the School has an appropriate procedure in place for considering appeals. All academic appeals are logged by the School. The School's policy for academic appeals does not fully align with the stipulations in the collaborative agreements, which assign responsibility for considering academic appeals to the degree-awarding bodies. Staff confirmed that students are required to exhaust the internal appeals procedure, before seeking any resolution from the degree awarding bodies, and students who met the review team confirmed that they are aware of the opportunity to escalate an appeal to the degree-awarding bodies should they remain dissatisfied. However, there is an absence of clear information in the School's procedures on the role of the degree-awarding bodies in considering appeals. Furthermore, there is conflicting information

with regard to the right of appeal against a decision made by the Academic Appeals Panel (see Information). In view of these findings, the review team **recommends** that the School revises the policy and procedure for appeals to ensure the requirements of the awarding bodies are met.

2.79   The School maintains a log of all formal complaints and appeals. The number of formal complaints received by the School is very low. Two complaints were received and resolved in 2016 and none since then. In the same period 30 academic appeals were submitted. All but one related to Pearson provision. The School does not make effective use of this information to manage its academic provision and to inform enhancements. For instance, matters arising from complaints or appeals are not reflected in the master action plan or formally reviewed anywhere (see Enhancement).

2.80   While there is an absence of clear information detailing the role of the awarding bodies in the consideration of academic appeals, the School has appropriate procedures for handling complaints and appeals. 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 (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

2.81   The School has a number of programmes that include a compulsory and assessed work placement element. Students on the Foundation Degree in Public Health and Social Care awarded by LMU are required to complete work placements of 100 hours at levels 4 and 5. Placement learning is embedded in year-long 30 credit modules. The BSc (Hons) Public Health and Health Promotion top-up awarded by LMU requires 180 hours of placement learning within a 60 credit distance learning project module. At present only students studying at the London campus undertake placements. The foundation degrees in business and in computing, which are also taught at the other two campuses, will require placements in the future.

2.82   The School has established a Work Placement Unit which manages the placement operation, confirming Disclosure and Barring Service checks on students at the programme admission stage, and facilitates the finding of suitable placements. Through a signed agreement it also ensures that health and safety checks and risk assessments are in place from each employer.

2.83   Students are given a Work Placement Handbook, and further information is available on the website. This handbook is also given to employers, as there is no separate employer handbook. Students are required to keep a log of their work activities, with placement organisations witnessing the recording of evidence. They are visited by a tutor at least once during placement, unless it is a very short placement.

2.84   Placements are assessed in the relevant work-based learning module of each programme. This consists of an individual report and the production of a reflective portfolio. In addition, for the Public Health and Social Care programme students are required to undertake a minimum of 300 placement hours at levels 4 and 5, keeping a log of their placement hours. Placement providers do not take part in the assessment of students on placement. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.85   The review team tested the School's arrangements for implementing and managing work-related learning opportunities by considering a range of documents and information including work placement handbooks, placement provider contracts, student learning logs and programme specifications. The team also held meetings with academic and support staff, students and with two placement providers by teleconference.

2.86   In its mapping of practice against the Expectations of the Quality Code the School states that it has no responsibility in respect of this Expectation (see recommendation in Expectation A2.1). Nevertheless, arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the awarding partners work effectively in practice. The School does not have a Work Placement Policy, but information provided to students and employers in the Work Placement Handbook is clear and comprehensive. The contracts with placement providers are fit for purpose and cover the student's job description, work plan, and include health and safety and risk assessment checks. There is a discrepancy in the information provided to students on placements between the programme specification and programme handbook for the UWL validated Foundation Degree in Business (see Information).

2.87   Students who had completed a formal placement reported that the School's expectations of them in the workplace had been explained, that they had received appropriate support before and during placement and found the experience valuable. Work placement providers confirmed that they had been sufficiently briefed and were able to give feedback to the School and individual students. The assessment of placement learning is recorded in the work-based learning modules for the foundation degrees and reported to the appropriate Examination Board. Although placement providers may be asked to write a report on the progress of a student, they do not take part in the formal assessment of students.

2.88   The School does not systematically review the effectiveness of its placement management. None of the School's committees has been assigned formal oversight of placement learning arrangements pointing to a gap in the monitoring and enhancement of learning opportunities for working with others. With the planned increase in work placement opportunities for business and computing students, the review team **recommends** that the School put in place a policy and procedures to ensure that work placements are implemented securely, managed effectively and regularly reviewed.

2.89   The School has a good working relationship with employers and adequate arrangements for managing placements and student learning are in place. There is a weakness in the review and institutional oversight of placement arrangements. There review team concludes that the Expectation is met but in the absence of a formal work placement policy and systematic review of arrangements the associated risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

The School does not offer research degrees.

Expectation: **Not applicable**
Level of risk: **Not applicable**

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.90   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. From the 11 Expectations in this judgement area 10 are relevant to the provider. Expectation B11 does not apply as the provider does not offer research degrees. All applicable Expectations are met and seven are judged to be low risk. The risk level of the remaining three Expectations is judged to be moderate.

2.91   There are no affirmations in this judgement area and no good practice has been identified.

2.92   There are ten recommendations in this judgement area. They are located in Expectations B1 to B5 and B7 to B10. The recommendations made in Expectation A2.1 are also relevant here.

2.93   The recommendations with regard to the policies and procedures for the development, approval and modification of programmes, located in Expectation B1, and the implementation of a quality monitoring and review cycle in Expectation B8 attract a moderate risk. This also applies to the recommendation in Expectation B10 which relates to the development and implementation of policies and procedures for work placements. The two recommendations in Expectation B7 with a moderate risk relate to the use of external examiner reports and the identification of cross-provision themes as well as to the clarification of responsibilities for the consideration of reports at institutional level.

2.94   The following recommendations attract a low risk. The recommendation in Expectation B2 is concerned with the process for the selection and admissions of students and the documentation of interview outcomes. Expectation B3 attracted a recommendation with regard to the development of a strategic approach to learning and teaching including the scrutiny of student data through the deliberative committee structure. There is also a recommendation regarding the development of a review and monitoring cycle for student services located in Expectation B4. Expectation B5 makes a recommendation to ensure that all students are fully engaged in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Finally, there is a recommendation in Expectation B9 concerning the revision of policies and procedures for academic appeals.

2.95   Although there are a number of recommendations in this judgement area, they do not individually or collectively carry a serious risk to the management of learning opportunities and all Expectations are met. The review team therefore concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

3   Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   The School publishes a range of information for students, staff and external stakeholders in print and digital formats. The School's website is the main point of reference for the public and includes information on the School's values and key policies and processes. The website also contains programme and application information for prospective students and information on student support and learning resources.

3.2   The VLE hosts a range of reference information for staff and students including all School policies, procedures and regulations, learning and teaching and student handbooks, study skills learning materials, information on learning resources including referencing, student support and on keeping student records. The latest external examiner reports, Pearson Academic Management Review reports and results of the NSS can also be found here. The VLE is also a repository for programme information and provides access for students to module handbooks, lecture and seminar materials and assessments.

3.3   The College maintains a Public Information Policy and Approval Procedure, which is reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee on an annual basis. The policy identifies information owners and approval responsibilities. The School confirms its commitment to ensuring accurate, consistent and readily accessible information in its Quality Handbook. The Executive Committee has ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of all published information. Department managers are responsible for approving information generated in their departments. The accuracy of information on the website and the VLE is regularly checked through cyber patrols. The School also has a Social Media Policy which governs staff and student communications within a social media platform which directly or indirectly reference the School. Where the School does not have sole responsibility for the accuracy of information, the Principal and Head of Quality is responsible for seeking written approval of such information prior to publication from the awarding partner. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4   The review team tested this Expectation by reading a wide range of documentation including the School prospectus, programme documentation such as handbooks and specifications, and academic policies and procedures. The team also viewed the School website and VLE and met with students, senior, academic and student support staff, and placement providers.

3.5   Information on the website is comprehensive and generally accurate. Policies and processes published on the website are the most recent versions approved by the School. Students confirmed that key programme information including entry requirements is readily available on the website and that they valued the information provided when deciding on their programme of study.

3.6   The School maintains a standard agenda for open days to ensure that consistent information is provided to all applicants. Students confirmed that the information made available to them prior to their studies was true to their experiences on their programmes.

They also find the VLE very helpful and easy to navigate. Students are provided with a generic student handbook as well as programme and module handbooks. Students on programmes that contain a work placement element also receive a comprehensive and useful Work Placement Handbook which is also shared with placement providers. Information contained within programme handbooks, specifications and module handbooks is generally fit for purpose. Students confirmed that they had access to these documents but that the programme specification and module descriptors were not routinely used by students.

3.7   Staff confirmed that they are informed of key policies and procedures as part of their induction and regularly kept up to date on policy developments by the Quality Unit. Staff can also easily access key policies, procedures and programme documentation via the VLE.

3.8   The School follows its policy for monitoring the accuracy of the published information on the website. A report of a cyber patrol confirmed that the process is working as intended and a check of the website revealed that the errors identified in the report have been addressed. It is unclear, however, where the findings of the report were considered and actioned.

3.9   Minutes of the Executive Committee confirm that it approves all the School's policies, but lack detail of a systematic review of the information contained within the policies to ensure their accuracy. Examples of policies provided demonstrated that the version control procedure is working effectively. All policies clearly identify the current version of the document, information owner, approval body, dates of approval and next review and by which audience the policy is intended to be used. The School's master action plan is subject to the same procedure however, the various versions seen by the review team do not demonstrate rigorous application of the procedure and it is unclear how the School maintains effective oversight of actions, their progress and completion (see Enhancement).

3.10   The process for the approval of information is not fully effective and has resulted in some information being published by the School that is not accurate and trustworthy. For example, the programme specification for the foundation degree in business states that students would be supported to find suitable work placements and students on this programme, who met the review team, are expecting to undertake a work placement. The programme handbook, however, states that the programme does not provide an opportunity for any direct work-based learning. Similarly, the Admissions Staff Handbook explicitly states that appeals against an admissions decision are not permitted which is in direct conflict with the Admission Policy, Procedure and Regulations. The review team also found inaccuracies in the information provided to students about academic appeals. Information in the Academic Appeals Procedure contravenes the agreements with the degree-awarding bodies. The agreement with UWL states that academic appeals are dealt with by the University using its procedures. It is not clear within the School's policy that students have the right to appeal to their degree awarding body. The policy stipulates that students must use the School's appeals process first. None of these issues were picked up by the internal information approval process. In view of these findings the review team **recommends** that the School ensures that all information for staff and students is accurate and trustworthy.

3.11   The Public Information Policy and Approval Procedure and the Quality Handbook state that staff are required to familiarise themselves with all information relating to their remit of work. However, some staff who met the review team were not aware of the Public Information Policy and Approval Procedure and unfamiliar with the operation of some of the procedures detailed within the policy. For example, academic staff were unfamiliar with the cyber patrol procedure to assure the accuracy of information on the web and the VLE and had not received reports on the outcome of such reviews or been informed of any resultant

actions required in response to this process as required by the policy. The review team therefore **recommends** that the School ensures all staff understand, adhere to and implement the Public Information Policy and Approval Procedure.

3.12   The School has a policy for the generation and approval of information. Information published by the School for students, staff and external stakeholders is generally fit for purpose and accessible. However, staff are not aware of the School's policy and the operation of the procedures detailed within the policy. There are also weaknesses in the implementation of the information approval process resulting in not all information being accurate and trustworthy. Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation C is not met with a moderate risk due to the identified shortcomings.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

3.13   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation is not met, and the associated risk is moderate. There are no affirmations or good practice in this judgement area.

3.14   The Expectation attracted two recommendations with regard to the accuracy and trustworthiness of published information and the adherence to and implementation of the Public Information Policy and Approval Procedure highlighting shortcomings in the rigour with which quality assurance procedures are being applied.

3.15   As the Expectation is not met and the associated risk is moderate, the review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **requires improvement to meet** 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 is aware of the need to systematically and consistently review and evaluate operations with the aim of improving learning opportunities for students. The School's vision states that it supports individuals to fulfil their potential through learning, achievement and progression, and its mission expresses the desire 'to be recognised as a leading provider of higher education that is inclusive inspiring and free from barriers to learning'.

4.2   The School does not have a formal enhancement strategy or equivalent to drive enhancement of student learning opportunities in a systematic and robust manner but states that improving the quality of learning opportunities occurs at institutional level, senior management level, and at operational level through teaching and support staff. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee is responsible for the development and promotion of enhancement initiatives, activities and institution-wide changes designed to enhance students' learning experiences. The School's academic policies do not articulate its approach to enhancement and the processes that would underpin it including the use of data and information.

4.3   The School's stated approach to enhancement in the self-evaluation together with the lack of a strategic approach to learning, teaching and enhancement and the lack of systematic use of robust information mean that the processes and procedures in place do not allow this Expectation to be met.

4.4   In testing this Expectation, the review team evaluated statements made in the self-evaluation, examined quality policies and procedures including the Quality Handbook, and read monitoring report and minutes of relevant committee meetings. The team also held meetings with senior, academic and support staff, and students.

4.5   The School has an ethos of continuous improvement, but it does not have a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The School's academic governance structures do not work effectively with regard to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. It is unclear which parts of the governance structure have responsibility for enhancement. With the exception of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee responsibility for enhancement does not feature at all or in any detail in the terms of reference. The School's most senior academic committee, the Academic Board, has no role to play in enhancement.

4.6   The School's approach, and supporting quality processes, to taking deliberative steps at institutional level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities are not defined anywhere and it is unclear how the School identifies institutional-level enhancement initiatives and priorities. It is also unclear how the School ensures that robust information systematically generated by students, external examiners and stakeholders is evaluated for the purposes of enhancement of the student learning experience, and how good practice and areas for improvement to inform the development of enhancement initiatives at a strategic level are identified. Improvements and enhancements are at best reactive and often ad hoc with little or no evidence of informed and robust use of data such as student surveys, the outcomes of programme monitoring, and external reports to drive enhancement at a provider level.

4.7   In the self-evaluation the introduction of Associate Deans at each campus and the formation of a Student Employability, Careers and Work Placement Unit are given as examples of enhancements at institutional level. While these have had a positive impact on the student experience, they have been ad hoc rather than planned developments. The former was initially developed in response to the awarding bodies' requirements for placement opportunities and the careers element was added at a later stage. Minutes of academic and management committees do not evidence systematic analysis of information to inform these or any other enhancement initiatives at School level. Furthermore, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee does not appropriately discharge its responsibilities with regard to the development and promotion of enhancement initiatives. Enhancement of student learning opportunities does not feature as an agenda item.

4.8   Two further examples illustrate the School's approach to enhancement; the development of a policy for pregnant students and the restructuring of the academic support for students. The former was described as a staff member's initiative and informal consultation with some students took place. The Students' Union or student representatives were not involved. The restructuring of academic support was reported to be a departmental initiative and took place without consultation with students. The proposal was submitted to and approved by the Principal. Neither initiative was based on an evaluation of data and information from quality assurance processes, considered or approved through the academic governance structures. In addition, the School missed opportunities to engage students as partners in the enhancement of their educational experience. Other enhancement examples cited in the self-evaluation and in meetings with senior staff are indicative of the same approach. They demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement but do not emanate from deliberative steps taken at provider level to facilitate enhancements. In view of this the review team **recommends** the School implements and monitors a strategic approach to enhancement in a systematic and planned manner.

4.9   The School does not have a quality cycle in place for the systematic identification, monitoring and review of actions and initiatives at provider level for quality enhancement. As there is a lack of summary reports across, for example, programme annual reports, outcomes of mid-term and end of term student module surveys, the School's ability to gain effective oversight of its academic provision and to identify strategic enhancements at provider level is hampered (see Expectation B8). In addition, the master action plan capturing actions arising from programme monitoring and other quality assurance activities runs to 25 pages with numerous detailed actions. It is difficult to see how it usefully supports the identification of key themes and institutional-level areas for enhancement. The review team therefore **recommends** the School implements a quality cycle to enable enhancements to be identified, monitored and reviewed for impact and informed by the use of robust and systematically generated data and information.

4.10   While the School has an ethos of continuous improvement and makes largely ad hoc enhancements to the quality of students' learning opportunities on various levels, it does not have a strategic approach to enhancement representing a significant gap in its policies and procedures. The implementation of the School's academic governance structures and oversight of the School's academic provision are ineffective, and there is a lack of systematic use of data and information from quality processes to drive enhancement at institutional level. Taking all these matters into consideration, the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met with a serious level of risk.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Serious

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.11   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation is not met, and the associated risk is serious. There are no affirmations or good practice in this judgement area.

4.12   The Expectation attracted two recommendations with regard to the implementation and monitoring of a strategic approach to enhancement and the implementation of a quality cycle to enable enhancements to be identified, monitored and reviewed for impact and informed by the use of robust and systematically generated data and information. These identified the ineffective operation of parts of the governance structure as well significant gaps in the policies and procedures relating to quality enhancement. The provider has a limited understanding of its responsibilities associated with key areas of the Expectation and has not recognised it has significant problems. The recommendations made in Expectation A2.1, B3, B4, B5, B7, B8, B9 and B10 are also relevant here.

4.13   As the Expectation is not met and the associated risk is serious, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the **does not meet** 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.