Higher Education Review of Moorlands College

May 2014

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Moorlands College. The review took place on 6 to 8 May 2014 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Peter Green
- Rev Prof Kenneth Newport
- Dr Iain Mossman (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

In reviewing Moorlands College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The themes for the academic year 2013-14 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review[4] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. 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/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review webpages: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Moorlands College

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

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

Good practice

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

- The proactive engagement with a range of external bodies to inform and develop programmes (Expectation A5).
- The arrangements and mechanisms for the academic, personal and professional development of students (Expectation B4).
- The comprehensive range of placement opportunities and the arrangements for supporting placement providers (Expectation B10).
- The strong community ethos developed by the College which promotes the enhancement of students' learning opportunities and their holistic development (Expectation B4 and Enhancement).
- The use of Annual Monitoring Reports to provide an effective mechanism for enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities (Expectation A4 and Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Moorlands College.

By September 2014:

- devise a mechanism for sharing external examiner reports with all students (Expectation B7).

By July 2015:

- develop and implement a process for reviewing the system of formal student representation currently being put in place (Expectation B5)
- ensure that placement management and monitoring are embedded in the arrangements for academic oversight (Expectation B10).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Moorlands College is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The introduction of an Academic Board to oversee and take responsibility for academic matters and information (Expectation A4).
- The actions being taken to extend the level 4 quality assurance procedures to encompass the level 3 Foundation Year Studies (Expectation A4).
- The actions being taken to formalise student representation (Expectation B5).

Theme: Student Employability

Moorlands College (the College) places student employability at the centre of its programmes. The emphasis on applied theology reflects this, and all programmes promote the development of understanding, skills and attitudes necessary for Christian service and employment. This is delivered and nurtured through the provision of placements of varying lengths and with a range of appropriate employers. The College monitors placements and works in close liaison with employers to ensure that both students and their placements derive benefit from the arrangements.

Employer involvement in the programmes is enhanced by the maintenance of relationships with graduates who are now employers, and by the use of part-time academic staff who are able to bring their professional experience to bear on the curriculum. The review team found clearly documented evidence of active and regular employer and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' liaison and involvement, and evidence demonstrates active involvement of employers in programme development and review. The review team also noted that there is capacity for further development of the quality assurance systems that underpin the College's successful employer-based initiatives.

The College has a long-standing relationship with the University of Gloucestershire (the University), as a collaborative partner who validate all its programmes.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining Higher Education Review.

About Moorlands College

The primary role of the College is to provide training and to equip people who want to work in the Christian and social service-related sectors. It is a member of the Evangelical Alliance and maintains links with a wide range of denominations and independent churches, Christian and other charities and the government sector.

The College provides learning opportunities for holistic (intellectual, practical and personal) skills, and achieves this through a set of academic programmes and work placements in supportive and challenging communities. This enables it to train people as successful practitioners.

The College has a long-standing relationship with the University, as a collaborative partner. The University validates all its programmes. These are attended by 260 students at undergraduate and postgraduate level. At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes:

University of Gloucestershire
- Year 0 Level 3 Foundation Year Studies in Applied Theology
- BA (Hons) Applied Theology
- BA (Hons) Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work)
- BA (Hons) Applied Theology (Community and Family Studies)
- MA Applied Theology
- MA Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work)
- MA Applied Theology (Christian Leadership)
- MA Applied Theology (Family, Youth and Community Work).

The programme offer is currently being revised, and BA (Hons) Applied Theology (Community and Family Studies), MA Applied Theology (Christian Leadership) and MA Applied Theology (Family, Youth and Community Work) are being phased out, with their content being incorporated as options within other appropriate programmes.

All undergraduate programmes are offered on both a full and part-time basis, although the vast majority of students are enrolled full-time. These students study under one of three modes of delivery:

- campus-based, under which students attend the main College campus for most of the working week
- placement-based, under which students receive the taught part of half of their modules in intensive blocks of study, and the remainder alongside campus-based students, allowing them to attend placements
- placement-based (Moorlands Centres), under which students attend half of their modules in intensive blocks of study alongside the placement-based students, and the remainder at other regional locations approved by the College and the University, which allows students to attend more distant placements.

All students, regardless of mode of delivery, are members of active tutor groups.

Postgraduate programmes are also offered on both a full and part-time basis, although most students are part-time. They are taught degree programmes and are delivered through blocks of study interspersed with a schedule of activities.

The College has an important relationship with the National Youth Agency (NYA), involving the approval of a professional award relating to the youth and community work elements of the programmes.

The College has not been subject to a QAA review of its own before, although it has been subject to periodic review by the University. This has most recently been the catalyst for procedural and systematic change, alongside other factors. These changes include the development of the Moorlands Centres to enhance the vocational opportunities offered by the programmes, a significant building programme to better accommodate both existing and prospective students and the strengthening of quality assurance procedures, especially around the Year 0 Foundation Year Studies.

Explanation of the findings about Moorlands College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards

Expectation (A1): Each qualification (including those awarded through arrangements with other delivery organisations or support providers) is allocated to the appropriate level in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

Quality Code, *Chapter A1: The national level*

Findings

1.1 The College has a collaborative partnership with the University of Gloucestershire that has been in place since 1994. There is a comprehensive Collaboration Agreement and transparency of partnership confirmation. The College has opened new sites and these have been formally approved by the University. The College incorporated recommendations for the University's institutional review and received a number of commendations.

1.2 The College provided a 'responsibilities checklist' which identifies the levels of delegated authority offered to the College by the University. The review team confirms that the content has been approved by the University through the Academic Link Tutor and it offers the College a substantial degree of autonomy in the delivery and assessment of the programmes of study. To further support this, there is a statement that the University safeguards the standards and mapping to the FHEQ.

1.3 The majority of programmes of study are validated by the University. For example, the BA (Hons) in Applied Theology indicates that mapping to the FHEQ is in place. There is also College awareness of the credit framework and a check of the course map for BA (Hons) in Applied Theology indicates that 360 credits are required at appropriate levels.

1.4 The review team were able to confirm that each qualification is allocated to the appropriate level in the FHEQ. The team looked at a range of University programme specifications and College programme specifications. These are provided for each programme of study. The evidence showed that each programme is allocated to the appropriate level in the FHEQ. The review team confirmed that the College offers a Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) Professional Grade in Youth and Community Work for the BA (Hons) in Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work) and for achievement of the postgraduate diploma in the MA in Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work).

1.5 The College also offers Foundation Year Studies validated by the College and outside of the University's control. However, this is aligned to the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) and the review team confirmed that the College validates the specification of the programme using the same quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms as applied by the University for its undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

1.6 Overall, the review team concluded that each qualification has been allocated appropriately to the FHEQ and the Expectation has been met. The risk in this area is, therefore, low since the Expectation has been met across all the provision.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2): All higher education programmes of study take account of relevant subject and qualification benchmark statements.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level*

Findings

1.7 The College provides the programme specification as its definitive record of aims, learning outcomes, learner achievements and one of a number of documents expressing subject and qualification benchmarks. Programme specifications are required to be written to the University template. The programme specifications provided are detached from the level 3 foundation year as a non-University-validated programme.

1.8 The four programmes currently being recruited for are synergistic pairs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. These pairs of programmes provide similar content of modules and shared dissertation and as such there is a lot of cross-fertilisation. There are three and four-year programmes of study. Programme specifications containing subject and qualification benchmark statements are made available to students and academic staff through a password-protected site. The College provides clear templates for the development of modules. It also provides a range of handbooks with information on programmes of study. The review team looked at all the programme specifications, handbooks and a range of modules and confirmed that they all took full account of relevant subject and benchmark statements.

1.9 To satisfy the University, the College submits appropriate proformas and documentation for Programme Review, Annual Monitoring, Periodic Review and any new programme validation. The University Quality Handbook specifies the requirements and templates for each document and is specific on the need for the College to take account of subject and qualification benchmark statements in its submissions. External reviewers are appointed by the University for validation and review on the recommendation of the College to ensure the requirements are met.

1.10 As an example, the College had a thorough review of its provision and quality processes by the University which noted the creation of the Academic Board in October 2013. While the College was asked to review student feedback and student representation, as well as produce an academic calendar, the University was satisfied the College's programmes were taking full account of subject and qualification benchmark statements. The review team also found that to safeguard the subject and qualification level at the College, the University regularly holds periodic reviews of all undergraduate and postgraduate provision, excluding the Foundation Year Studies. To close the loop, outcomes and recommendations are presented at a University Academic and Quality meeting with recommendations fed back to the College for implementation. The College demonstrated its awareness of the recommendations and the review team noted the College's intention to address them.

1.11 Therefore, the review team was able to ascertain that clear mechanisms are in place to ensure the College takes full account of subject and qualification benchmarks statements and that they are appropriately aligned to *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval* and *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* of the Quality Code. The review team concludes that Expectation has been met and therefore the risk was deemed to be low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3): Higher education providers make available definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for a programme of study.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: The programme level*

Findings

1.12   The University systems and requirements underpin the College's own quality assurance framework. The University has a comprehensive Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH) supplemented by the College's Quality Manuel. The Handbook identifies College procedures for the dissemination of information and is a collection of in-college documentation developed over time through practice. One of the key requirements of the Handbook specifies that the College ensures that appropriate programme specifications covering programmes aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievement for a programme of study in accordance with *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code are evident for each programme of study.

1.13   While the programme specifications provide a vehicle for programme aims, learning outcomes and expected learner achievements, the programme handbooks and module handbooks top up this information. Programme and module handbooks are updated annually through Course Committee scrutiny and review, and disseminated to students on the virtual learning environment (VLE). The programme handbook contains definitive information on the aims and learning outcomes for a programme of study. The modules provide clear expressions of necessary outcomes pertinent to the appropriate level. The review team established that these are reviewed annually at the relevant Course Committee and in future the outcomes will be received by the Academic Board.

1.14   The review team established that module descriptors clearly indicate how much credit is associated with each module and the descriptors tie in with the University modular template offering CATS 120 points per annum. For example, the College's programmes of Applied Theology are located within the spectrum described by the Theology and Religious Studies subject benchmark statements. The programme specifications are written to demonstrate the subjects' alignment with the Theology and Religious Studies subject benchmark statement. The College provides clarity about the relationship between the programme and the subject as it is nationally understood.

1.15   Through meetings with staff and students, the review team established that both student representatives and teaching staff are able to critically comment on potential changes and updates to programme and module aims, level and learning outcomes at the course committees. Students can informally raise concerns with the Vice-Principal Academic and informal access for students to senior management on pedagogical matters is readily available.

1.16   The team found that the level 3 foundation learning outcomes prepare the student to embark on the undergraduate programmes and clearly map to level 4. The students confirmed that there was a noticeable albeit appropriate change of level when moving from foundation to level 4.

1.17   Overall, the review team concludes that the College's approach to design, approval, information dissemination and update of programme aims and module outcomes meets the Expectation of *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code. At the same time it is clear that effective monitoring of aims and learning outcomes was taking place through the course committees. The risk in this area is, therefore, low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A4): Higher education providers have in place effective processes to approve and periodically review the validity and relevance of *programmes.*

Quality Code, *Chapter A4: Approval and review*

Findings

1.18   While the College has not taken a programme to validation for three years, there are clear procedures on how this happens. Currently, before any programme comes forward for validation, it is reviewed by the relevant Professional Advisory Group. At the same time the College alerts the University that it is seeking the validation of a new programme via the Preliminary Notice Form. The University-appointed Academic Link Tutor supports new programme developments. The proposal goes to the Academic Development Group who undertakes the design of academic proposals. The proposal is further scrutinised by the Senior Management Team. Validation proposals were previously signed off by the Board of Trustees after scrutiny from the Academic Development Group. However, now the newly constituted Academic Board confirms that new programmes for validation meet academic standards. The Board of Trustees will confirm it fits with strategy and meets financial and business viability. There is a requirement that *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval*, *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* and *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* of the Quality Code are fully in place to ensure it has effective processes to approve and periodically review the validity and relevance of the programmes. The review team were concerned that part of these chapters was not yet fully implemented at the College.

1.19   The review team confirmed that the University appoints external reviewers for programme validation and review, and the College has established two professional advisory groups to provide additional external advice. Programme development involves both College senior and teaching staff at an early stage and a team led by the Vice-Principal Academic works the validation document up as the potential new programme moves towards the validation event. The document is submitted to the University who oversees the final validation event.

1.20   The University reviews each validated programme within a four-year cycle of validation. The Course Leader for each programme leads the production of Annual Monitoring Reports annually for each programme of study to go forward for University scrutiny. The Annual Monitoring Reports provide a critical review of the academic health of each programme and are accompanied by an Action Plan to address any issues that arise. The University provides a brief formal response to the Annual Monitoring Reports with suggested recommendations. The Reports provide an excellent audit trail of current actions to be addressed and how the previous year's actions were dealt with.

1.21   All Annual Monitoring Reports are reviewed by respective course committees. At this stage, action plans are viewed by student representatives as well as module staff for further discussion. Changes to modules have to be approved by the University after being approved by the Course Committee. The review team concluded that the College has produced commendable Annual Monitoring Reports with a highly accessible and relevant Action Plan enabling effective and speedy evaluation. This is also referred to in the Enhancement section of this report. However, the review team established that as yet the College is not fully undertaking the same internal annual and periodic review processes for its Foundation Year Studies. Processes and procedures for review are specified in the University's QAH and reinforced by the College's QAH. The review team agrees there was a need to extend quality assurance procedures to encompass the Foundation Year Studies.

1.22   Through the analysis of evidence and meeting with senior staff, the review team established that the course committees have clear terms of reference. The Senior Management Team, whose membership comprises the Principal, Vice-Principals and Business Manager, meets weekly to deal with day-to-day operational matters. Recently, the Senior Management Team has devolved its academic scrutiny to the new Academic Board. The prime internal responsibility for assuring academic standards and quality is now held by the Academic Board.

1.23   The review team notes that too many aspects of final academic scrutiny are still carried out by the course committees; for example, receiving Annual Monitoring Reports. This is viewed by the review team as not entirely satisfactory and potentially not fully cognisant of the Academic Board's terms of reference. At present, the review team found that the Academic Board has not taken on all its expressed functions contained in the terms of reference. The Senior Management Team confirmed the need for the Academic Board to fulfil its role in its entirety. However, the College saw its small size as advantageous in achieving this effectively and quickly. This view was accepted by the review team.

1.24   Academic Board meetings were held in October 2013, January 2014 and April 2014. The review team noted that the Academic Board will take on elected student representatives in 2014-15. Senior management confirmed that student representation was on hold until they felt confident that the Academic Board was fully operational and running well. The review team confirmed this to be a sensible approach.

1.25   There is a College Calendar for teaching in line with the requirements of the University. The College determines the dates of the meetings of its boards and committees at those meetings annually, but does not include these dates in its calendar, which is seen as an operational tool to organise teaching activity. The College acknowledges that the introduction of the Academic Board brings resource implications and recognises the need to build long-term academic structures to meet the Strategic Plan.

1.26   Overall, the review team felt that the College was progressing towards alignment with *Chapter B1* and *Chapter B10* of the Quality Code to ensure it has effective processes to approve and periodically review the validity and relevance of the programmes. The team recognised that *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* of the Quality Code was yet to be fully embedded in new oversight processes. The review team **affirms** the introduction of the Academic Board to oversee and take institutional responsibility for academic matters and information, and the extension of all quality assurance procedures to encompass the level 3 Foundation Year Studies was also **affirmed** by the review team. In this respect the team concludes that the Expectation has been met but the risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (A5): Higher education providers ensure independent and external participation in the management of threshold academic standards.

Quality Code, *Chapter A5: Externality*

Findings

1.27   The College uses external examiners on its programmes of study. External examiners are appointed by the University on the recommendation of the College. This task is undertaken by the Senior Management Team who submit candidates to the appropriate University panel. This approach aligns with *Chapter 10: Managing higher education provision with others* of the Quality Code. Evidence demonstrated that the University does not always accept the College's proposals. For the review team, this offered robustness in the process of selection. The College also acknowledged that in future approval of external examiners CVs need to go through Academic Board before being forwarded to the University. The procedure for the appointment of external examiners is in line with *Chapter B7: External examining* of the Quality Code.

1.28   Examination boards are held regularly with module tutors in attendance and they are given the opportunity to meet and discuss matters with external examiners at final boards. External examiners produce a formal written report based on a template provided by the University indicating that 'national standards are maintained'. The report template is structured to enable examiners to provide a critical review of the delivery of the modules.

1.29   Through meetings with staff and students and examining evidence, the review team determined that external examiner reports are received by the respective course committees for critical scrutiny to discuss matters raised by the examiners. Staff and student representatives as members of the course committees are given the opportunity to see the reports, but there is no formal mechanism in place to feed back to the student body. In future, the College stated its intention to submit external examiner reports for receipt by the Academic Board.

1.30   The College makes effective use of its external examiner reports and they are appended to the Annual Monitoring Reports. The Annual Monitoring Reports offer actions on matters raised by external examiners as part of its annual critical review taking full account of *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* of the Quality Code.

1.31   The College also operates two professional advisory groups to support this process of critical review, acting as critical friends to the College by offering a range of perspectives on the delivery of the College's programmes of study. The College also uses an external consultant as an external member of the Academic Development Group to provide critical review of validation documentation or to advise on feedback from the University, as well as any other matters of academic importance to the College.

1.32   The College also receives employer feedback from the placements in the form of written reports. The University appoints and assigns an Academic Link Tutor and Programme Coordinator to the College to provide critical oversight, as well as providing feedback to the University and offering informed advice to the College. Furthermore, the review team established that the College has an internally created post of Foundation Year External Examiner provided by an external academic drawing on University quality procedures and processes.

1.33   Overall, the review team felt that the College's proactive engagement with a range of bodies to inform and develop the programmes constituted **good practice**. The review team concludes that the Expectation has been met and that therefore the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A6): Higher education providers ensure the assessment of students is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Quality Code, *Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes*

Findings

1.34   To evaluate this section, the review team were keen to identify how the College manages the assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning. All external examiner reports confirm that the award of qualifications and credit meet intended learning outcomes. This goes some way to confirm that the assessment of students is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and credit is based on the achievement of intended learning outcomes. Furthermore, the University undertakes periodic review of the College's provision which delivers confidence in the assessment of students and its oversight of accredited prior learning. The review team considered that this goes some way to meet *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* of the Quality Code.

1.35   The review team was able to confirm that the College has a good proportion of well qualified staff at master's and PhD level. This gave the review team additional assurance, particularly through the supportive approach that the College takes to staff development, that the approach to assessment is likely to be robust, valid and reliable. The College stated that it has 12 full-time academic staff and this includes senior academic managers, many with solid and relevant academic experience of assessment management. In addition, the review team met a number of part-time staff who demonstrated knowledge of the assessment of levels and learning outcomes. The College supports its part-time teaching staff with appropriate staff development. It contributes to fees, travel, books and remission, for example to undertake PhDs. Staff are encouraged to attend conferences and annual appraisals enable them to identify their training needs. The review team also noted that some were external examiners at other higher education institutions.

1.36   The College has a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework which sets out the key regulations and principles governing all assessment and feedback. It confirmed that the Framework has been disseminated to all stakeholders and that staff showed an awareness of aspects of it.

1.37   The College also operates an Assessment Scrutiny Panel to support its system of internal verification, which scrutinises a range of assessments and is accountable to the Academic Board. The process is monitored by the Vice-Principal Academic. Meetings of the Assessment Scrutiny Panel are minuted and approval is sought for all assessment tasks. The Panel receives assignments from tutors who confirmed its key role was to check them off against the relevant specified learning outcomes, approving that they are appropriate to the level and that the tutor is neither under nor over-assessing. A number of academic staff confirmed that their assignments go through the Assessment Scrutiny Panel. They also agreed that the Panel acted in a constructive and positively critical way, appropriately negating a need for staff to be over-sensitive to criticism.

1.38   Overall, the team concludes that the Expectation has been met. The College has procedures and processes in place that provide assurance that the management of the assessment is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualification and credit is based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The risk is, therefore, low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.39   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex two of the published handbook. All Expectations for the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards are met with the associated level of risk low in five instances and moderate in one. The College's responsibilities for maintaining threshold academic standards are to ensure that it adheres to the policies and processes set by its University partner and staff are well supported to do this.

1.40   There is one feature of good practice, no recommendations and two affirmations in this area. The good practice relates to the particularly positive way that the College engages with external bodies, and its impact on the development of programmes. The affirmations relate to the recent introduction of an Academic Board, which now provides more comprehensive oversight, and the extension of quality assurance procedures to encompass the level 3 Foundation Year Studies.

1.41   In summary, the team found that the College is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities to its degree-awarding body. The review team concludes, therefore, that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: Quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers have effective processes for the design and approval of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval*

Findings

2.1   The College has effective processes for the design and approval of programmes, born from a successful partnership with the University over many years. The QAH sets out a fitting overarching framework for 'Course Planning, Validation & Approval', based on the processes of the University, and similarly details the terms of reference of the key groups involved in programme design. Overall responsibility for programme design is held by the Academic Board, who submit proposals for approval by the University. The Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees scrutinise business cases for each proposal. The Academic Development Group undertakes the design of academic proposals, drawing on a range of stakeholders including students, the expertise of staff within the College and external input from the College's Professional Advisory Board. Programmes at level 4 and above follow the procedures of the University for approval, while the Foundation Year Studies, which is the responsibility of the College, was developed less formally, but has been brought in alignment with the College's quality framework by the Academic Board. This approach is fully aligned with *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval* of the Quality Code.

2.2   The review team considered the operation of these processes by conducting meetings with employers and with staff involved in programme design and approval at all levels, by reading the minutes of relevant committees, and by scrutinising (re)validation documents prepared for the University and for accrediting bodies.

2.3   Staff met by the review team had a thorough understanding of the processes around programme design and approval, and were able to describe in detail arrangements for the validation of new programmes with the University and accrediting bodies. This understanding was backed up by the minutes of the groups and committees involved in programme design, which showed that appropriate care had been put into developing proposals, such as the redesign of the postgraduate programmes and the development of Moorlands Centres. The documentation the College produced for its revalidations was similarly robust.

2.4   Staff spoke of the strong links the College has with the University and of the diligent work of the Academic Link Tutor in assisting in these matters. Employers noted examples of their impact on programme design through informal contact with the College and through the Professional Advisory Group, citing examples such as developing methods of assessment of placements and the College reinstating a faith-based curriculum meeting.

2.5   While the Foundation Year Studies had not been subject to an intensive design process but had rather been informally developed in the College over 2004-05, it was clear that the staff involved in the programme had a strong understanding of effective design practices and that the programme had been developed as an appropriate stepping stone to level 4. The review team also heard the College's plans to bring the Foundation Year Studies into alignment with the other quality assurance procedures in the College, and this included an appropriate equivalent to revalidation based on the University's revalidation procedure.

2.6   The team concludes that, on the basis of the strong relationship between the College and the University, the clear processes for programme design and the ethos of external input, the College has effective processes in place for programme design and approval and the Expectation is therefore met. The widespread understanding of these processes, and plans in place to enhance the approval process at foundation level, led the team to conclude that the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Policies and procedures used to admit students are clear, fair, explicit and consistently applied.

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Admissions*

Findings

2.7   The College is responsible for the design and implementation of the admissions policies and procedures, and these are monitored by the University. The College has an extensive checklist/guidance booklet for staff involved in admissions which sits alongside a formal admissions policy. Together these two documents provide an extensive account of the College's processes and procedures and give a clear indication of the College's attention to transparency and the application of principles related to equality of opportunity.

2.8   The admissions policy is dated April 2013, indicating currency, and was previously approved by the College's Senior Management Team; in future it will be approved by the Academic Board. The letters sent to successful/unsuccessful applicants contain details of the offer and indicate the conditions upon which the offer is made or explain the reasons for decline. The overall process of admissions is overseen by an Admissions Manager, who is also the academic registrar. The Admissions Manager reports directly to the Vice-Principal Academic.

2.9   There is a system of appeal against a decision, which is set out in the admissions policy. The College makes fairly extensive use of accreditation of prior learning (APL) and the self-evaluation document refers to one student who had achieved a postgraduate diploma from another institution and was admitted directly to the dissertation stage of level 7. The College operates a system of review of applications for APL which is operated by the Admissions Manager/Registrar and the Vice-Principal Academic for whole-level decisions and, for part of a level of studies, Boards of Examiners. The documentation that underpins these procedures is informed by those formerly used by the University. The College, however, has devised its own system for APL and has created the relevant application forms. The website indicates that students who do not have prior certificated learning ('no paper qualification') can apply for AP(E)L 'where your work and other life experience is taken into consideration'. The College's website provides information relating to admissions for prospective students.

2.10   The review team came to the view that the policies and processes set out in the relevant documentation are such that in principle Expectation B2 could be met. It was noted that appeals against a decision to decline the offer of a place are considered by the Admissions Manager/Deputy Principal and the review team came to the view that this provided the opportunity for unsuccessful applicants to have their appeal reviewed fairly by at least one senior member of staff who had not been involved with the initial decision to decline the offer of a place. It was also noted that the arrangements for APL, where such includes the consideration of prior learning, were a little unclear given the reference to the University website and the non-use of the procedures there outlined, but were nevertheless in principle appropriate and arrangements for APL are communicated to applicants.

2.11   In addition to scrutiny of the relevant documentation provided by the College, the review team discussed admission processes with members of staff. The team explored in particular whether formal training in admissions was provided for those involved in this aspect of the College's activity including that related to equality and diversity. Overall, the review team concluded that the College has in place appropriate policies and procedures used to admit students and that these are clear, fair and consistently applied. The review team formed the view that significant attention is given to the wider context in which academic suitability for admission to degree (or foundation) level study is conducted at the

College and how such considerations relate to the institutional ethos. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation has been met and the 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

2.12   The 'responsibilities checklist' indicates that the College is responsible for developing a framework for learning, teaching and assessment, which is monitored by the University. The College has developed such a framework and this has been discussed with colleagues and approved by the Board of Trustees. The framework is dated January 2011. The framework indicates that 'the College is committed to the ongoing professional development of its teachers, holding regular faculty training days and facilitating personally driven professional development projects' and such training and development is a feature of the College's practice. Aspects of development that relate to the overall enhancement of student learning opportunities and teaching practice include the encouragement and practical support given to staff who wish to undertake higher degrees. There is a system of peer teaching observation and a wider staff development policy. Staff are supported to attend relevant academic and professional conferences. Continuing scholarship has been built into the College's timetabling and load monitoring practices and a recent development has been the move to free Mondays from teaching activity to enable staff to engage in scholarly activity. Specific training in learning and teaching is also provided by the College. Several academic staff have gained fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and CVs indicate that staff are engaged in training events related to learning and teaching.

2.13   There is clear awareness of the need to ensure disabled access to sites of learning and evidence that this is a factor in approval of off-site provision. The College has support structures to enable those with learning support needs to succeed and students are aware of the availability of such support and how to access it. The College has a significantly higher percentage of students with support needs and this is in part attributed to the College policy of proactively assessing all students. Academic staff are aware of the means by which identified needs of learning support for particular students are communicated to those responsible for teaching.

2.14   The College has plans for extensive building work at the Christchurch Campus which has the potential to disrupt learning for students currently based at the College, and this is being monitored by the Academic Board. At the time of the review visit, the plans for the new building project were advanced with a high percentage of the funding in place and planning permission obtained. The new facilities will provide significantly enhanced space, including an auditorium with a seating capacity of 350. Both students and staff commented on the rather limited IT facilities which are principally, though not exclusively, the result of weak broadband connections. The College is in the process of putting in place a replacement connection which will improve connection times. The use of a VLE has not been significantly adopted at the College, though appropriate technologies are used to make documentation and other learning resources available; the MA Course Committee minutes and action plan indicate that further investigation is being undertaken and consideration given to wider use of an appropriate VLE. Social space and staff-student learning opportunities are a significant part of the College's overall strategy for learning. There is a system for gathering student data at the end of each module which is analysed independently of the module tutor. The tutor is then informed of the feedback and writes a report for discussion at the relevant course committee. The College administers an exit

survey which is collated independently of the academic staff member and discussed at the relevant course committee. The College will engage with the National Student Survey from 2015. Post Graduate Theology (PGT) student feedback, although requested, has been limited. The College sought advice from the HEA regarding the use of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) but was advised against it on statistical grounds. Other mechanisms for accessing student data relative to PGT provision are being explored.

2.15   The College has processes in place to draw enhancement opportunities from external examiner reports and there is evidence of the use of statistical data on retention to monitor quality of student support and achievement. Staff undertake annual reviews with their line managers to consider areas for personal development. Student course handbooks are provided that give information on how students may access appropriate resources and other learning support.

2.16   In addition to scrutiny of the initial and additional documentation supplied by the College, the review team met with the Principal, senior staff, staff representatives more widely and students to explore arrangements for and practice of review and enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practice. The review team also noted relevant sections of the College's website.

2.17   Overall, the review team came to the view that the College has robust systems in place in this area of its provision and that practice and policy are consistent. Although difficult to pin down to any one particular document, process, meeting or other single source, during the visit the review team formed the overall view that the College's ethos was such that the provision, review and enhancement of learning opportunities for students are matters of considerable priority to College staff.

2.18   The review team came to the view that the College's systems for working with their staff, students and other stakeholders to articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices are such that they enable the Expectation to be met and the 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

2.19   The College has a range of systems in place to ensure the provision, review and enhancement of appropriate arrangements and resources to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Some of this has been outlined under Expectation B3 and in addition the review team noted in particular the extensive use of a tutorial system. The role of the tutor is to support students' academic and personal development and the type of person who should act as tutor is spelt out. The range of types of persons who act as tutors to students is diverse. College staff based at Sopley, Moorside South West (MSW)-specific tutors (who may not be involved in the delivery of academic provision), placement-based tutors and fieldwork tutors all have a role to play. The roles and remits of personal tutors are well defined, and there are significant expectations as to how frequently tutors, tutees and tutor groups should meet. The College has numerous informal opportunities for students to interact with staff and to access support in this context.

2.20   Support for students with learning needs is provided. There is currently one student at MSW with a declared specific learning difficulty and the resultant needs are being addressed. The College is arranging for staff at MSW to undertake dyslexia training. The Vice-Principal Development took the lead in addressing the specific needs of the student concerned and was supported in this by a member from the student support team.

2.21   The College's library collections are developed according to an agreed policy. Students at Moorlands also have access to the library at Sarum College, and access to other theological libraries, such as that of the London School of Theology, has also been arranged. There is an induction process that explains how to access resources and other formal and informal means by which this information is conveyed. The induction programme for new students, the Moorland Arrival Programme, indicates that attention is given to basic study skills and transition into higher education. There are particular arrangements for students who enter the College at level 5. The College offers a fund for students who need pastoral support beyond that which the College can offer; five students have benefitted from this in the last 12 months.

2.22   The College operates both an exit survey and learning support survey, although the information these contain is relatively sparse, particularly so in the case of the learning support survey where only two of the 36 students who had accessed learning support responded. Although the Academic Board received the results of the learning support survey and agreed to thank the learning support department for their work, evidence of analysis of exit survey results was limited.

2.23   The College places great emphasis on students experiencing the 'SPAR' treatment: Spiritual, Practical, Academic and Relational development. This framework provides an overall context within which students are supported to develop holistically as professionals.

2.24   The review team came to the view that the College's arrangements for enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential were fit for purpose. The team did note, however, the scarceness of information that was available via the exit survey and learning support survey, but came to the view that the College is seeking to address this, for example by taking part in the National Student Survey in 2015 and seeking

external advice on the possible use of PTES. Although HEA advice was that in the latter case the size of the cohort would make the survey outcomes statistically unreliable, the team took the view that the College is aware of the need to access relevant information to drive enhancement.

2.25   In addition to scrutiny of the initial and further documentary evidence supplied by the College, the review team discussed the College's arrangements for enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential with a range of staff and students including holding a meeting specifically with placement tutors.

2.26   Overall, the review team came to the view that the Expectation is met and the risk is low. Such can be seen, for example, by the fact that one student with very limited prior educational experience who had come into the foundation year was currently expected to exit with a 2:1 degree. In particular, the team noted as **good practice** the strong community ethos developed by the College which promotes the enhancement of students' learning opportunities and their holistic development.

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

2.27   The College is responsible for ensuring that students have appropriate opportunities and encouragement to be engaged as partners in quality assurance and the University reviews and monitors these arrangements. The College takes a direct approach to student representation, encouraging an approachable culture whereby all students feel empowered to help shape their learning. The College's policy is that student representatives are appointed by their peers, although there is some tutor involvement. The College's intentional and deliberate fostering of a culture of approachability is the wider context within which engagement of students in the QAH takes place, although there are clear formal mechanisms to enable specific, structured engagement.

2.28   As a result of it being noted that student representation has traditionally come predominantly from students based at the campus, attention has recently been given to the issue of representation from placement-based students and from MSW. This has resulted in the appointment of representatives from all areas of provision and all levels. At the time of the review visit, this system was in the process of being implemented; it will be fully operational by September 2014.

2.29   Students also have representation on course committees. There is currently no student representation on the Academic Board, though the College intends to include student representation from the next academic year. The College does not have a structured formal system of training for student representatives, although it was confirmed that individual conversations with representatives did take place on a more informal basis. The view was expressed that the training of representatives needed to be on a more formal footing, especially in the context of the diversification of provision delivery. The student submission offered some comment on student representation, though this relates only to activity based at the main campus; it concludes that the student voice could be more effectively heard by the College, perhaps by placing greater emphasis on the role.

2.30   The College does not have a formal mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness of student representation. The undertaking of a review of the system for student representation was included as an action point on the 2012-13 annual partnership monitoring process by the University.

2.31   There are a number of other ways in which the College involves students in the assurance and enhancement of their education experience such as the use of 'pink slips', which are made available to students at the end of each lecture, in the reception area and in the dining hall. These slips provide a means by which a student, or group of students, can immediately feed back to College staff on their learning experience. It was also noted that the student body has direct access to the Principal via regular meetings held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Student Council.

2.32   In addition to reviewing the self-evaluation document and the student submission, the review team explored mechanisms for student engagement with representatives of the student body with staff. During both meetings it was confirmed that there is significant opportunity for informal representations to be made and some examples of this were given: the turnaround time for one particular assignment which had been drawn to the attention of the College through informal means and been acted upon. The review team noted the

minutes of a sample of course committee meetings which confirmed that students were either present or had sent apologies for absence. The review team explored the progress of the review of arrangements for student representation with College staff during meeting 8, and were informed of progress towards bringing in a revised system for September 2014.

2.33   The review team came to the view that in principle the arrangements made for student representation and engagement with the QAH were appropriate, although the informal approach to student representative training was noted as potentially problematic as was the lack of a formal system for reviewing the effectiveness of current practice. The team also noted that the inclusion of student representation on the Academic Board from September 2014 would further strengthen this aspect of the College's arrangements. The review team also concluded that when seen within the context of the institutional size and, most importantly, wider general ethos, the fostering of 'intentional approachability' was likely to lead to significant opportunities for students to be involved in the enhancement of learning and that examples of such had been provided by the College.

2.34   Overall, the review team concludes that the ethos at the College is such that students did have the opportunity to make individual and collective representations in an open way and that the more formal mechanisms that had been put in place, while at present rather limited, also contributed to the overall process of student representation. The review team was encouraged to note the recognition on the part of the College that as the diversity of provision widens, the formal mechanisms for student representation, including the training of student representatives and the formal review of effectiveness of the processes and policy, may need to be strengthened further. With this in mind, the review team **recommends** that, by July 2015, the College should develop and implement a process for reviewing the system of formal student representation currently being put in place. The team further concludes that the College's stated intention to include student representation on the Academic Board, when met, would add a further level of student involvement in the development of the College's academic provision, and **affirm** the actions being taken by the College to formalise student engagement.

2.35   The review team concludes that the Expectation has been met but, in the absence of a mechanism for reviewing the new system of formal student representation, the risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit.

Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*

Findings

2.36   The College has a reliable suite of policies, processes and groups which ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for their awards. Explicit principles relating to assessment and feedback are published in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework, and these include giving students a diversity of assessment tasks including formative and summative components. All assessments are reviewed through the Assessment Scrutiny Panel, whose role ensures that assessment promotes effective student learning and balanced assessment loads. Students are given clear information and appropriate support regarding assessment. Staff are well qualified and they receive training and development for their roles in assessment, as do those field work tutors who are also involved in assessment. Feedback is offered in many forms to ensure it promotes learning and facilitates improvement. The College's approach to the assessment of students is fully aligned with *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* of the Quality Code.

2.37   The review team examined a range of documentation relating to assessment. This included policies, guidance documents, programme information, external examiner reports, assessment briefs, and minutes of the Assessment Scrutiny Panel. Meetings were held with College staff, students and employers.

2.38   The teaching staff who met the review team were knowledgeable of the processes involved in the assessment lifecycle of the College. Staff were particularly positive about the impact of the Assessment Scrutiny Panel which was seen to assure consistency and enhance the quality of assessments. Several examples were given to illustrate this impact: two assessments from separate modules had been discovered as similar to one another, which allowed modifications to be made, and another assignment brief was modified to improve the clarity of the task for students. This evaluation was backed up by the minutes of the Panel, which highlighted how they had formalised the assessment brief template, and had challenged staff to revise their assessments to fit the template.

2.39   The College has generic marking criteria at each of foundation, bachelor's and master's levels; all assignment briefs have to relate these criteria to the assessment, although the Assessment Scrutiny Panel has noted that further work is needed to encourage staff to make better use of the 'Expectations' area of the assignment brief. The review team judged the sample assessment briefs to be of high quality, containing significant detail and encouraging the student to reflect critically on the given topic.

2.40   The College makes efforts to ensure assessments are spread throughout the year for students, but recognises that this is increasingly challenging with the opening of Moorlands Centres. The College has also recognised that there was an issue with the timeliness of feedback during 2012-13 for staffing reasons, and the Academic Board have monitored the situation through course leaders to ensure that feedback is returned in a timely manner. This situation was also commented on by students; however, both students and staff recognised that there had been improvements made in this area during the current academic session. Academic misconduct is considered during student induction with an appropriate exercise and assignment submissions sheets remind students of the expectations on them in this regard.

2.41   Up until 2013-14, the College's process for moderation - moderating the marks of the full cohort of students for each assignment - was highlighted as good practice by external examiners on numerous occasions. However, given the cost implications of this practice, and some revised guidelines from the University, the College revised their moderation policy reducing moderation to a sample. The team considered the new policy to be appropriate as it covers the different delivery modes at the College, ensuring that students studying on the same module in different modes of delivery are moderated separately to ensure consistency.

2.42   The team concludes that the Expectation has been met on the basis of the strengths of the documentation around assessment, the widespread enthusiasm for the work of the Assessment Scrutiny Panel, and the positive engagements between students and staff around assessment. The way in which the Academic Board had monitored the one issue around the timeliness of feedback gives the team confidence to conclude that the risk for this Expectation 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

2.43   The University appoints, inducts and manages all external examiners and has oversight over external examining procedures in place at the College, while the College has the opportunity to recommend suitable candidates to the University. Examiners submit their reports in the first instance to the University, where they are reviewed before being sent to the College, where they are considered at course committee. Resultant actions are included in programme-level action plans submitted in Annual Monitoring Reports to the University. This procedure is in alignment with the Expectation of *Chapter B7: External examining* of the Quality Code.

2.44   In judging this Expectation, the review team considered external examiner reports, Annual Monitoring Reports, minutes of Course Committee meetings, and documentation of the University. The team met with senior staff as well as with students.

2.45   The senior staff with whom the review team met showed a detailed understanding of the external examining procedures at the College and University. Examples were given of changes made in response to external examiners' reports, such as readjustments to an assessment task, and changes to the balance of written and oral work. Several noteworthy issues were raised in one external examiner report on the 2012-13 cycle, which required action by the College prior to the start of the next cohort. The College provided a detailed response including significant steps to remedy the issues highlighted, to the satisfaction of the external examiner and the University.

2.46   The minutes of course committees showed that student representatives have the opportunity to engage with external examiner reports; however, the College's informal policy is that it was the responsibility of the student representative to share the report with the wider student body. The team met with a student representative who confirmed that they had seen their external examiner report; however, the wider group of students the team met with were not aware of the reports or the importance of external examining. Given the lack of awareness of external examiner reports among students, the review team **recommends** that by September 2014 the College devise a mechanism for sharing external examiner reports with all students.

2.47   The team concludes that the Expectation is met on the basis of the effective procedures for progressing and actioning external examiners' reports. Furthermore, given the prompt attention the College has paid to the issues raised by external examiners, the team concludes that the risk for this Expectation is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers have effective procedures in place to routinely monitor and periodically review programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review*

Findings

2.48   The University holds ultimate responsibility for reviewing and monitoring the College's programmes, periodically through revalidations every four years and annually through the annual monitoring process. Similarly, the University holds periodic and annual reviews of the College as an institution, through the partnership review and associated annual monitoring report, which evaluates the College's quality assurance mechanisms and processes. The College's QAH sets out the internal procedures for modular reviews and programme-level reviews, and assigns appropriate responsibilities. Various forms of information enlighten these reviews including student evaluation, external examiners, the professional advisory groups and management information. These internal processes feed into the monitoring reports to the University. The College has complete responsibility for the oversight of its foundation year. While it does not have established processes for monitoring and reviewing this programme, it has recognised the need to do so, and intends to adapt the procedures of the University's periodic reviews to its own context. Subject to the development of the procedures for the review of the foundation year, the team felt that the College's approach towards monitoring and review was in alignment with *Chapter B9: Programme monitoring and review* of the Quality Code.

2.49   The review team tested this approach by meeting with senior staff, teaching staff and students. In addition, it reviewed the processes outlined in the College's and University's Quality Manuals, considered the documentation stemming from past monitoring and review events, and scrutinised the minutes of course committees, Senior Management Team meetings, and meetings of the Academic Board.

2.50   Both groups of senior and teaching staff were able to articulate their roles within the College's and University's monitoring and review processes. Senior staff gave a detailed explanation of the how student feedback informs module evaluations, which in turn inform course committees, which in turn feed into action plans as part of annual monitoring, and are subsequently actioned and fed back to students. This was tracked through a request students on one programme made for additional seminar opportunities, which went through this process and saw the curriculum changed. The team saw documentary evidence to confirm the broad understanding of these processes, with action plans being effectively implemented by course committees and appropriately received and monitored at Academic Board level. The College's diligence in following the University's procedures has been remarked upon positively by the University, with the College responding to any suggested action points arising from annual monitoring in an appropriate and timely manner. Students were happy that their feedback was listened to and actioned as part of these processes. The College has also been proactive in identifying areas which could be monitored more effectively by the University's processes, for example the standard templates for annual monitoring do not take into account the different modes of study of Moorlands students, and in response the College is developing a database to enable effective monitoring of differences between these modes.

2.51   The College has identified that it does not have a process for monitoring the standards of its foundation year. The team met the foundation year leader in the meeting with teaching staff, who gave a strong evaluation of the plans to implement a stringent internal review, based on the procedures of periodic review at the University, and building on the localised review undertaken at course committee level. The minutes of the Foundation Year Course Committee confirmed that modular and programme review was being

undertaken annually, but the review team affirmed in Expectation A4 the College's actions to extend the level 4 quality assurance procedures to encompass the level 3 Foundation Year Studies.

2.52   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met on the basis of the effective procedures for monitoring and review and the widespread understanding of those procedures. However, given the current lack of formal monitoring process for the foundation year, the team consideres there to be a moderate risk for this Expectation.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have fair, effective and timely procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic complaints and student appeals*

Findings

2.53   The University is responsible for the governance of the academic appeal procedures. The College is responsible for handling student complaints, and its systems are reviewed and monitored by the University. The College has an appropriate and proportionate complaints policy and procedure, with complaints logged in a database. These procedures are supported by effective information for students about how to make a complaint in the College Life Handbook. The College plans to implement a standing item on the agenda of the Academic Board to consider complaints and appeals. Given the size of the College, the review team agrees that this policy and procedure is proportionate and aligned with *Chapter B9: Academic complaints and student appeals* of the Quality Code.

2.54   The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's policies and procedures by scrutinising documentation related to complaints and appeals, examining the complaints database and meeting with students.

2.55   The complaints database demonstrated that while the database was an effective tool, with each complaint assigned the responsibility of a senior member of staff, and follow-up actions logged, there were no major complaints over the 2012-13 academic session, with the six logged items being positive or constructive feedback or relatively minor issues. Each complaint was nevertheless accompanied by an appropriate review and response. This was corroborated by the College having received only two appeals since validation with the University, both of which were ultimately unsuccessful.

2.56   The students who met the review team were all aware of the information in the College Life Handbook about the complaints procedure, and that they could submit a complaint online which would be forwarded to the Vice-Principal Academic. However, they commented that given the approachable culture of the College, they would be likely to go and speak with the Vice-Principal Academic in person.

2.57   The team concludes that the Expectation is met on the basis of the effective procedures for surrounding complaints and the strong understanding of these by all stakeholders. Furthermore, given the size of the College, approachable culture and historic small numbers of complaints and appeals, the team concludes that the risk for this Expectation 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

2.58   The College makes considerable use of placements as a means of enriching the learning opportunities of students, and to this end it has oversight over the quality of learning opportunities delivered through placement learning. Two of the modes of study at the College are 'placement-based', either at the Christchurch Campus or at Moorlands Centres, which means that students undertake substantial elements of placement-based learning as integral parts of their programmes. Placements are also important to the campus-based mode of study, and all students, except those on the MA Applied Theology programme, who pass through the College will have undertaken a placement as part of their programme. The College's philosophy around placement learning is set out in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework, which recognises that significant learning takes place both through and in reflection on professional practice. The management of placements is overseen by a dedicated administrator at the Christchurch Campus, and the Centre Manager at MSW. These posts maintain regular and open contact with placement supervisors. Placement providers are sought out from appropriate local churches, organisations and groups and are provided with significant information packs, and placement tutors are inducted into their roles with training offered through Placement Link Days. Placements are monitored by mid and end-of-year reports on the students' progress, which are followed up in person by the Placement Manager where necessary. Students can feed back on their experience in placement surgeries run by the Placement Manager, and any student with concerns about a placement can raise them via their fieldwork tutor, who would raise this issue with the placement provider.

2.59   The team agreed that this approach to the management of placements was effective, securely implemented and given sufficient resource (including staff), and that there were appropriate processes to ensure the quality of learning delivered through placements. However, the team agreed that the approach was highly reliant on the role of the Placement Manager and operational committees, but did not include any element of formal monitoring and oversight by the senior academic bodies of the College. The team agreed that this potentially posed a risk to the ongoing quality of learning opportunities delivered through placements. The review team therefore **recommends** that by July 2015 the College ensure that placement management and monitoring are embedded in the arrangements for academic oversight.

2.60   The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach to meeting the Expectation by reviewing a range of documentation relating to placements, including College proformas, University responses to monitoring reports, information for fieldwork tutors and information given to placement providers. The team also met with placement tutors, fieldwork tutors, College staff with responsibility for placements and students.

2.61   The placement providers who the review team met were very positive about the range of support they were offered by the College. The placement tutor link days run by the College are well attended, with 65 attendees over two sessions in 2013, amounting to around 80 per cent of placement providers, and placement tutors articulated that these events were useful in developing a community of placement supervisors and sharing good practice. Placement supervisors and fieldwork tutors also valued the support they received

from the College, particularly from the Placement Manager. The placement information packs that the team examined were an effective tool in setting out expectations between placement organisation, placement tutor, fieldwork tutor and the College. The students who met with the team were also very positive about their experiences on placement, mentioning the breadth of opportunities, careful support and appropriate management of the process, and these viewpoints were confirmed by evidence presented in the student submission. Similarly, the University has remarked that 'Moorlands has achieved excellence in its management of student placements and in eliciting student reflection on their workplace experience that has notable value to the students' academic and personal development'. The review team agrees that the comprehensive range of placement opportunities and the arrangements for supporting placement providers is **good practice**.

2.62   The team concludes that the Expectation is met on the basis of the strong links between placement providers and the College, and the effective management of placements. However, given the current lack of academic oversight over placement management and monitoring, there is a moderate risk for this Expectation.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research degrees*

Findings

2.63   The College offers no research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

Quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.64   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All of the Expectations for this judgement area were met and the associated level of risk was low in seven cases and moderate in three.

2.65   There are two features of good practice. These relate to the way that the College promotes the academic, personal and professional development of students, the wide-ranging placement opportunities available to students and the impact of the ethos of shared values and endeavour within the College community. The team also made three recommendations. The first relates to the need to share external examiner reports with students. The second refers to the development of a mechanism for reviewing the newly established system of formal student representation. The third relates to the incorporation of placement management and monitoring in academic oversight.

2.66   There is also one affirmation where the team recognises the actions being taken to formalise student representation.

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

3 Judgement: Quality of the information produced about its provision

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

Quality Code, *Part C: Information about higher education provision*

Findings

3.1 The College's approach to meeting this Expectation is set out in its Public Information Policy, and offers an effective route to ensuring that all information the College produces is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Overall responsibility for information lies mainly with the Senior Management Team with the Academic Board responsible for programme information; all digital or printed material is commissioned or approved by one of these two bodies. Explicit responsibility for maintaining and managing the College website is distributed between a number of roles. There is a clear process for uploading information to the website and intranet, Student Zone. Similarly, there are clear approval routes for course information which must be approved by the Course Leader. Information for prospective students, whether digital or in hard copy, is approved by the Admissions, Promotion and PR subgroup of the Senior Management Team. The College has a policy of reviewing the text of all of its printed and online materials each summer. Internal management information is delivered to staff through a common folder on computer workstations and internal databases accessed through a single portal. The University inspects examples of published information, and monitors and reviews the systems the College uses to review that information. These policies and procedures align with *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code.

3.2 The team tested the College's approach to meeting this Expectation by examining the content and accuracy of information published on the College's website, a promotional DVD, student handbooks and programme information published on the College's intranet, Student Zone, and information for staff in the College's common folder. The team also met with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

3.3 The team met the Vice-Principal Development currently responsible for the College website, who is fully aware of the current procedures in place for managing information at the College. The College recognises that its management of information is still in its infancy and that the Public Information Policy has yet to be fully implemented. Two examples were given to illustrate this point around the annual review of information: that it is not practical to review information around admissions over the summer, and that while information published on the College website was comprehensively reviewed in the process of moving to a new hosting provider, other areas of information have yet to be reviewed in line with the policy. The College is aware of the need to develop a formal mechanism to oversee the process of the annual reviews of information. However, the information inspected by the review team was universally deemed to be fit for purpose, accessible, accurate and trustworthy, so concerns were not raised around the incomplete implementation of the policy.

3.4 Programme handbooks are published on Student Zone, and these provide extensive and accurate information for students on a range of appropriate topics - other useful programme information is available via the downloads section, which contains module guides, lecture recordings, assessment briefs and placement information. The College Life Handbook, also available through Student Zone, contains information of relevance to all

students regardless of programme, and the main campus handbook contains information relating to activities on the Christchurch Campus. All handbooks were well received by students, and students were aware of where to go to find information relevant to them. All information the review team saw for prospective students was accurate, including the prospectus, which details the wide range of services students can expect from the College.

3.5   Staff are aware of how to access management information, and have received appropriate information to assist in evaluating modules and programmes in the course committees. The team was able to review the common folder used to share information between the faculties and is confident it is effectively used to share information.

3.6   The team concludes that the Expectation is met on the basis of the clear set of responsibilities set out in the Public Information Policy and the accuracy of information across all areas of published information. The plans to improve and implement the policy further lead the team to conclude that the risk for this Expectation is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Quality of the information produced about its provision: Summary of findings

3.7   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area was met and the associated level of risk was low.

3.8   There were no features of good practice, no recommendations and no affirmations.

3.9   The review team therefore concludes that the quality of the information produced about its provision **meets** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: Enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

4.1   The College undertakes a number of enhancement-driven activities, although it does not presently have one single overall policy document. Progress towards the formation of such has recently been enabled through the creation of the Academic Board at which Enhancement is a standing item and has provided the context for the development of a discussion paper. Prior to the establishment of the Academic Board, the College operated informal mechanisms for enhancement, mobilising the strong relationships between staff in a small institution. For example, where good practice was identified, this was discussed at training events and/or through informal discussion.

4.2   The review team came to the view that the College's mechanisms for enhancement, including those that are currently principally of an informal nature, are such that they could in principle enable the provider to meet the Expectation. The team further took the view that the more recent move towards developing a more formal process of enhancement, and to facilitate and encourage college-wide discussion of strategic enhancement, would potentially provide an effective means for further embedding enhancement within the College.

4.3   In addition to scrutiny of the relevant documentation, which included noting the documented progress towards the development of a formal enhancement policy, the review team discussed enhancement with members of the College staff. The team also gave consideration to other enhancement activity that emerged as part of the overall review process. Here the team notes a number of strategies such as the formation of the Academic Board itself. Other examples include the extensive use made of externality, which extends beyond the statutory requirement for the scrupulous use of external examiners and interactions with the University, to the work of the professional advisory groups and the wider enabling of input from the College's extensive network of placement tutors and student employers. Note was also taken of the development of a formal system for student representation, the use of 'pink slips' by students to feed back on lectures, actions taken to respond directly to students who had alerted the College to issues with access of books and other learning resources, and the development of arrangements for reviewing the foundation year. All of the above strategies are understood by the team as examples of deliberate steps being taken to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. There are, however, two areas of the College's provision that are considered by the team to be particularly strong: the use of the College's Annual Monitoring Reports, which provide an effective mechanism for enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities and which are regarded by the review team as **good practice**. The wider community ethos, which promotes the enhancement of students' learning opportunities and holistic development, is also **good practice**.

4.4   Overall, the review team formed the view that deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities and that the College is actively seeking to widen the scope and effectiveness of such. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.6   The team identified two areas of good practice relating to the use of Annual Monitoring Reports to provide an effective mechanism for enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities, and the community ethos that promotes enhancement. The team made no recommendations or affirmations.

4.7   The team is therefore able to conclude that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

Approach College takes to meeting expectations

5.1   Opportunities for student employability are nurtured through the provision of placements of varying lengths with a range of employers. All placements are overseen by the College and are intended to give students new experiences and to challenge them. Employers take the role seriously and offer placements based on individual student strengths. Some students also undertake block placements and are involved in a range of different activities. The commitment on a placement can vary from three to 20 hours per week.

5.2   The College monitors the placements with an expectation that all employers provide written feedback on student performance and development. The review team identified that employers provide written feedback which is monitored by the Placements Manager and Team through the Placements Assessment Panel. This Panel provides input if issues arise. However, the review team notes that there is no formal institutional oversight of the quality of the placement system at committee or board level. The evidence showed that neither the Academic Board nor the course committees received reports on the academic health of the placements system.

5.3   While on placement, the student is responsible for going through the written report with the placement provider. Placement tutors also meet with students from time to time to discuss their progress and provide support and advice. The placement system enables students to develop a greater understanding of employment requirements and fosters a likelihood of an informed decision as they prepare for the future world of work. Some employers felt that students may be embarking on their placement with a lack of preparatory practical life skills which if in place would enhance their development while on the placement.

5.4   The College offers an Open Day which enables some students to identify a likely placement through meeting a range of employers. They are able to select a specific area they wish to focus on. Some may be allocated to an area as they are uncertain which career path they wish to pursue. Others are clear from the start which area of work they wish to embark upon and some placements have been over a full three years. This is regarded by employers as highly beneficial to students.

5.5   The reviewers identified that employer involvement in the development of the curriculum comes through the Professional Advisory Group. Employers are able to comment on and influence College practice. For example, the College withdrawal of the faith-based curriculum meeting was reconsidered following employer consultation, as was the maintenance of three-year placements. This is clear evidence of employers having input into the curriculum to enhance future student employability. The College nurtures student employability through its maintenance of relationships with graduates who are now in employment. This offers opportunities to develop further work placements and to share experiences through fostering a strong sense of community.

5.6   In further support of student employability, many of the part-time academic staff bring their own anecdotal employment experiences into the learning process which is highly beneficial to the student body.

5.7   Overall, the review team confirms that the system of placements made a fundamental contribution to student employability, fostering greater understanding and

preparedness for the world of work as well as increasing the likelihood of success in securing employment after graduation. However, the review team also feels that a stronger degree of institutional quality assurance of the placement system would be beneficial.

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 27 to 29 of the Higher Education Review handbook.

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

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

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

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

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.

Public information
Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

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.

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.