Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Moorlands College

May 2018

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Moorlands College. The review took place from 22 to 24 May 2018 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Tessa Counsell
- Mr Steve Evans
- Ms Sophie Elliott.

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

Judgements

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

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

Good practice

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

- The careful design of programmes to integrate theory and practice, which enables students and graduates to apply their learning successfully (Expectations B1and B10).
- The reflective nature of learning, reinforced by the comprehensive nature of the placements, which provides vocationally relevant enrichment to the programmes, thus greatly enhancing the students' competence in practice (Expectations B3 and B10).
- The multi-layered support structures, which enable students to develop fully their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

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

By September 2018:

- ensure needs of non-standard and direct-entry students are identified during the admission process to ensure they are able to commence their programme on an equal basis with other students (Expectations B2, B4, B6 and C)
- review the arrangements for induction and ongoing transition, including progression between defined levels of study and for students who begin at different points in the academic cycle, to ensure all students are able to successfully progress and complete their programme (Expectation B4)
- develop a mechanism for identifying and recording informal complaints to enable effective monitoring (Expectation B9).

By December 2018:

- ensure that the system for managing library resources enables students to have appropriate and timely access to those learning resources (Expectations B4 and C)
- review, revise and implement the Information Policy to ensure the effective communication of information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectation C)
- develop further and articulate the provider-level strategy for enhancement to ensure a more deliberative and consistent approach to enhancing the student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team did not affirm any actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students.

About the provider

Moorlands College (the College) was established in 1948 to provide training to equip people for work in the Christian and social service-related sectors. Since 1994, the main part of the College's activity has been to deliver higher education programmes, validated by the University of Gloucestershire (the awarding body). The College also runs a number of non-higher education courses and training events, some of which are validated at level 3 by NCFE.

The College's main campus is in Christchurch, Dorset, and in addition to this it has two Regional Centres, the South West Regional Centre in Torquay, Devon, and the Midlands Regional Centre in Selly Oak, Birmingham. A third Regional Centre, the South East Regional Centre in Brentwood, Essex, will commence operation from September 2018. The College employs a headcount total of 89 staff, 31 of which are teaching staff and 15 of which are professional services staff; 18 teaching staff and 11 professional services staff are based at the main campus in Christchurch, with remaining staff being based at the Regional Centres.

The College runs three higher education programmes falling within the scope of this Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): two undergraduate degrees, the BA (Hons) in Applied Theology and the BA (Hons) in Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work) and one taught postgraduate degree, the MA in Applied Theology. At the time of the visit the College has 272 higher education students: 178 undergraduate students, all but one of whom are full-time, and 90 postgraduate students, all of whom are part-time.

The College's two undergraduate programmes are designated to have 4-year as well as the standard 3-year formats. The additional 'Foundation Year' functions at level 3 to widen access for students who would otherwise be excluded from the undergraduate programmes. The BA (Hons) in Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work) has the addition of being professionally accredited by the National Youth Association (NYA), with students who successfully complete the degree at Honours level also being awarded the 'JNC Professional Grade Youth and Community Work Qualification' by the NYA.

The College offers all of its programmes in two modes - campus-based and placement-based. Approximately 40 per cent of the College's students are placement-based. At the College's main campus in Christchurch, students may study via both modes modes, whereas at the College's two Regional Centres all students study placement-based modes. All students on placement-based modes study for periods of time at the main campus in Christchurch.

The last QAA Review was a Higher Education Review (HER) (Plus) in 2014. Since then, three major developments have been completed: a major building project at the Christchurch campus; strengthening of the quality assurance processes of the Foundation Year; and resolving issues with the quality of broadband access. Ongoing major activities include the opening of a new Regional Centre in the South East in September 2018; further strengthening of the College's identity as a UK higher education provider, including participation in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2016, and a submission for a full award of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) in 2018; and the establishment of a new MA programme, with a proposed start date of 2019.

Since the 2014 HER, the College has undergone annual monitoring visits in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The 2017 monitoring visit noted that the College had evaluated and implemented all of the actions arising from the 2014 HER, and that commendable progress had been made.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 Moorlands College (the College) does not have degree-awarding powers and currently delivers two undergraduate programmes and one postgraduate programme validated and awarded by the University of Gloucestershire (the awarding body), to 272 higher education students.

1.2 The awarding body is responsible for the setting and maintenance of academic standards and the College has responsibility for delivery and assessment.
The Responsibilities Checklist outlines the respective responsibilities of the awarding body and the College with reference to maintaining the academic standards of the awards.
The Collaboration Agreement and 2017-2018 Collaborative Delivery Plan set out in detail the partnership arrangements and the responsibilities for all aspects of the marketing, admissions, enrolment and the chronology of the student journey, including teaching materials, assessment and feedback and student support. Each of the undergraduate programmes includes the possibility of a foundation year at level 3 to provide access for students who would not otherwise satisfy the admissions requirements for the three-year

degree programmes. The Foundation Year is outside the remit of the awarding body, given its level, and responsibility for the setting and maintaining of standards for this element of the College's programmes, therefore, resides with the College.

1.3 The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) is used as a reference point for all of the College's higher education programmes, as per the awarding body Quality Handbook, the College's Quality Manual and programme specifications. The Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies is used in framing the programme learning outcomes of the programmes, which also assign credit appropriately to those detailed in the UK Academic Credit Framework. The Youth and Community Work Subject Benchmark Statement and National Youth Agency (NYA) Professional requirements are also referred to on the relevant programmes.

1.4 The arrangements to secure threshold academic standards would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised additional documentation and met with senior and teaching staff during the visit. Meetings with senior and teaching staff confirmed that the College's higher education programmes are correctly positioned at the appropriate level of the framework for higher education qualifications and national credit frameworks, and that the relevant subject benchmark statement is adhered to. Programme learning outcomes are defined in programme specifications and qualifications awarded upon their achievement by assessment.

1.5 The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that the academic standards for the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding body are maintained. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.6   While the awarding body is responsible for the academic standards of its awards, the College is responsible for the delivery and assessment of modules and programmes and maintaining those academic standards through its academic frameworks.

1.7   The awarding body has established processes for the approval of the higher education programmes at the College which ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualifications, and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations. The College's contribution to the maintenance of academic standards are laid out in the Collaboration Agreement, Responsibilities Checklist, and in the 2017-2018 Collaborative Delivery Plan. The agreement with the awarding body sets out clearly the responsibilities of each partner and states that the College is responsible for all delivery and assessment on the agreed, validated, programmes, while the awarding body is responsible for programme development and validation, annual monitoring and periodic review. The College uses the awarding body's detailed Academic Quality and Partnerships Handbook, Academic Regulations and Assessment Handbook and the awarding body's Admissions and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) policy to inform its processes with regard to all delivery, management, assessment and quality assurance of the programmes. The College's Academic Terms of Reference and Organisational Chart demonstrate that the College has an effective structure in place for managing its responsibilities regarding academic management of its higher education provision. The relevant academic regulations are clearly laid out for staff and students in Programme Handbooks on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.8   Responsibility for the adherence to the academic frameworks sits with the College's Academic Board, normally chaired by the Principal. The Board reports to the College's Board of Trustees and the awarding body. This is monitored by the latter through periodic Partnership Review, annual monitoring and review of programmes, and through chairing of the College's examination boards.

1.9   The arrangements relating to academic frameworks and regulations would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised additional documentation, including the minutes of Academic Board meetings, and met senior and teaching staff and students at the review visit. Evidence from the meetings demonstrated that staff and students are fully aware of the academic framework and the relevant academic regulations for each programme. Staff confirmed that appropriate standards are set at validation and maintained through effectively moderated assessment processes. Students were fully aware of all information regarding their programmes, academic regulations and assessment.

1.10   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that a robust academic framework and appropriate academic regulations secure academic standards. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.11   The College adheres to the requirements of its awarding body regarding the validation of programmes and the accompanying definitive documentation, and a detailed programme specification is in place for all programmes on the University's template. These are accompanied by a course map and module descriptors, available to staff and students on the Programme Handbook page of the College VLE.

1.12   Validation of programmes and any subsequent modifications adhere to the awarding body's processes and use its documentary layout and templates. When modifications are proposed and approved, the definitive documentation is updated. The College VLE contains a regularly updated section of definitive documentation and key reports. Definitive records of historic programmes are included in the Academic Registry folder of the College's intranet, accessible by staff involved in academic management. Records of students' module results and awards are held in the College's database. These remain accessible in perpetuity for the production of transcripts and confirmation of awards.

1.13   The arrangements for the production and maintenance of definitive documentation would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team met staff from the awarding body and senior and teaching staff from the College, and all confirmed the processes in place for the development and maintenance of programme specifications as the definitive reference point for all programmes.

1.14   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that a definitive record of each programme and qualification is produced at the time of validation and maintained thereafter, in order to provide an accurate reference point for the delivery and assessment of programmes. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.15   The awarding body's processes for the approval of the taught programmes delivered at the College, as described in the awarding body's Academic Regulations and Quality Handbook, together with the Academic Quality and Partnerships Handbook, ensure that the academic standards of the programmes at the College are set at the correct level (see also Expectation B1). The awarding body retains formal responsibility for ensuring compliance with the FHEQ level descriptors and relevant subject and professional benchmarks, identifying module content, associated learning outcomes and assessment strategies for the courses delivered on its behalf by the College.

1.16   Although the College has not validated a new programme since 2011, it has in place appropriate procedures for the development of new areas of study thought the Academic Development Group, set up by the Academic Board, with overall responsibility resting with the Vice-Principal (Academic). The Academic Development Group evaluates the potential for new programmes of study fitting to the overall mission of the College.
The minutes of meetings of the Academic Development Group are received and reviewed by Academic Board, enabling the College to maintain strategic oversight of the processes as they progress. For example, a new programme is currently in development and recent minutes of the Academic Development Group and Academic Board demonstrate discussion regarding aims and learning outcomes, and the potential of current student transfer by the accreditation of prior learning. Draft programme aims and learning outcomes and programme structure for the proposed programme were tabled at a recent Academic Development Group meeting and demonstrate detailed understanding of the setting of outcomes at a level which meets the UK threshold standards and are in accordance with the academic frameworks and regulations of the awarding body.

1.17   External input into the design and development of programmes is realised in part by external panel members on the awarding body's validation panels. In addition, the College ensures that placement supervisors have significant input into validation and revalidation processes with the awarding body and the College Professional Advisory Group of employers and supervisors feeds into ongoing programme improvement. One programme also benefits from being PSRB-accredited by the National Youth Agency.

1.18   The arrangements for the approval of taught programmes would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised additional documentation and met with liaison staff from the awarding body and senior staff at the College. These meetings confirmed the processes in place for the design and approval of modules and programmes, which adhere to the awarding body's academic regulations.

1.19   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place for the approval of taught programmes to ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets UK threshold standards. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

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

Findings

1.20   The awarding body is responsible for ensuring that credit is awarded only where students have met the learning outcomes required within assessments, and where UK threshold standards have been met. This is achieved through the College's adherence to the awarding body's policies and procedures outlined within the Collaboration Agreement. All modules within the programmes are credit-bearing through assessment and are governed by the awarding body's Academic Regulations. The College has rigorous procedures in place to ensure that it complies with the assessment regulatory frameworks of its awarding body as set out in programme specifications and assessment guidance documentation.

1.21   The awarding body approves the module learning outcomes and associated assessment strategies during validation/revalidation ensuring that they meet the requirements of the Quality Code and any related professional body benchmarks. While the awarding body retains responsibility for the preparation of learning outcomes, the College is responsible for preparing, obtaining external examiner approval, marking, and moderating the assessments for the programmes it delivers.

1.22   The arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised a range of documentation including the College's Quality Manual, minutes of meetings of the Course Committee and Academic Board, and external examiner reports and responses. The review team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff along with representatives of those involved in academic management at the College's Regional Centres.

1.23   External examiner reports commented positively on module assessment activity and assignment briefs. The review team found that the College's partnership with its awarding body ensures processes in the design and approval of assessments are in line with the requirements of national frameworks, and maintain that credit is only awarded where learning outcomes have been demonstratively achieved.

1.24   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that credit and qualifications are only awarded when threshold standards have been met and demonstrated through assessment. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.25   The Responsibilities Checklist indicates that annual monitoring and periodic review are the responsibility of the awarding body. The 2017-2018 Collaborative Delivery Plan states that the College should follow the awarding body's standard reporting requirements at course and partnership level through Course Evaluation Reports (formerly known as Annual Programme Monitoring) and Annual Partnership Monitoring.

1.26   The most recent iterations of the Course Evaluation Review report for undergraduate programmes in 2016-17 and for postgraduate programmes in 2017 indicate that the Course Evaluation Review process indicates that this is a thorough process, covering student numbers, student satisfaction at modular and programme level, retention and achievement data, graduate progression to employment, contextual data on the student cohorts, a report on periodic review and any revalidation where relevant, student feedback, teaching, learning and assessment, comment on the continued mapping of the programmes to the awarding body's strategy, course committee findings and action plans, external examiner reports, and annual statements of good practice and enhancement.

1.27   External examiner reports are at the core of the Course Evaluation Review and the awarding body's template for the external examiner report specifically requires observations on the level of the award and the extent to which standards are comparable with the FHEQ and other institutions.

1.28   In addition to Course Evaluation Review, an Annual Partnership Review, informed by the College's academic action plan, is carried out by the awarding body. The Annual Partnership Review reports on the ongoing strategy of the College and its relationship with the awarding body, issues from the Course Evaluation Reports and any planned future developments.

1.29   An institutional level Partnership Review was undertaken in 2015 in line with the provision set out in the Collaboration Agreement and Collaborative Delivery Plan. Course Evaluation Reports fed into the Partnership Review, together with the outcomes of the QAA HER (Plus) 2014 and the professional statutory regulatory body (PSRB) review which had taken place during the period. All programmes delivered at the College underwent Annual Programme Review concurrently with the Partnership Review and were revalidated for a period of a further five years. The College's quality assurance processes were also reviewed and found to be effective. Resources, student support, and teaching and assessment were reviewed in detail. Templates have recently been revised to include specific acknowledgement of the continued alignment of programmes to the requirements of Part A of the Quality Code. These were approved at the March 2018 meeting of the College's Academic Board.

1.30   The arrangements in place for the awarding body to regularly monitor and review the provision at the College, and the College responses, would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised additional documentary evidence and met staff from the awarding body and the College. Evidence

from the meetings confirmed that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are fully understood and expedited, for example by the development of consistency and good practice across the teaching staff by teaching team summits on the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. In addition all policies have been mapped against the Quality Code, ensuring understanding by teaching staff.

1.31   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that monitoring and review of programmes is undertaken effectively and that academic standards are maintained. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.32   The College makes use of a range of independent and external expertise in order to manage its academic standards. External and independent experts from higher education and relevant industry sectors are routinely used in the validation processes for qualifications of the awarding body and the annual review of programmes. In addition, the College consults with representatives of the awarding body in the preparation, development and running of the programmes. Mirroring this, the College's own internal process for approval of the Foundation Year includes an external reviewer as a member of the validation panel.

1.33   During programme delivery, external examiners, industry partners and programme advisors offer ongoing external perspective and input. Professional Advisory Groups, comprising relevant practitioners and employers, are used as important reference points for the relevance and fitness for purpose of the College's programmes. The College's BA Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work) also benefits from the NYA as a PSRB.

1.34   External input to academic decision making is also ensured through the College's Academic Board where membership includes an external academic consultant and the Academic Link Tutor of the awarding body.

1.35   The arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team examined the range of documentation referred to above including external examiner reports and relevant meeting minutes. The team also met with senior and academic staff.

1.36   The review team found that independent expertise is used and implemented at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards by the College. The Academic Development Group, which reports to the Academic Board, was set up by the College to lead the evaluation of potential new courses on a case-by-case basis and develop proposals of new programmes or significant modifications to current programmes. The Academic Development Group has recently consulted relevant external practitioners in the development of a new MA programme to provide a relevant industry perspective on current issues within the sector.

1.37   In addition to the standard role of external examiners in verifying the setting and maintenance of academic standards through their assessment responsibilities, external examiners also advise on the academic standards of the awards, review College resources, meet with staff and students, and can assist in the sharing of good practice. External examiner observations on draft submissions of validation documents are also taken into account.

1.38   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that external expertise is used, in programme development and assessment, which ensures that academic standards are consistently set and

maintained. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.40   All Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all cases.

1.41   The College has appropriate policies and procedures for ensuring academic standards and for the management of the quality of programmes, which are aligned with the policies and procedures of the awarding body.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   Responsibilities for academic quality associated with the delivery of programmes are divided between the College and the awarding body, as described by the Responsibilities Checklist. Within the College, the work of assuring and enhancing academic quality is led by the Vice-Principal (Academic), administered and implemented by all staff, and overseen by the Academic Board. The higher education programmes offered by the College are delivered through validated programme arrangements with the awarding body. The award is accordingly validated and quality assured by the awarding body and the College's responsibilities relate to the design and development of the programmes. As a result, the awarding body has responsibility for the setting of threshold standards, with learning outcomes aligned with relevant qualification descriptors; the programmes are also referenced to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. All programmes are designed to enable application of theory to practice, with placements being core to the delivery model. One of the undergraduate programmes also benefits from being professionally accredited by the NYA.

2.2   The process for the design, development and approval of programmes is described in the awarding body's Quality Handbook and the College's Quality Manual. The former details the requirement for any new proposals to be scrutinised for strategic fit, lists the criteria for validation, including staffing and resources, and refers to the setting of academic standards with due reference to external benchmarks. The awarding body has also undertaken approval events at each of the College's Regional Centres in order to confirm the appropriateness of each location to deliver previously approved validated provision, and detailed reports demonstrate the suitability of each centre. The process includes student and external expertise input, the Professional Advisory Group being an example of the latter. The College does not provide formal training for staff involved in programme development or approval. Instead, the work is overseen by the Vice-Principal (Academic) and appropriate guidance and mentoring is given to relevant staff as the need arises.

2.3   The College has not validated a new programme since 2011 but, as described in the Quality Manual, has in place appropriate procedures for the development of new areas of study in the Academic Development Group. This group evaluates the potential for new programmes of study fitting to the overall mission of the College. The minutes of meetings of the Academic Development Group are received and reviewed by Academic Board, enabling the College to maintain strategic oversight of the processes as they progress. A potential new programme is currently in development and recent minutes of the Academic Development Group and Academic Board demonstrate discussion regarding aims and learning outcomes, and the potential of current student transfer by the accreditation of prior learning. Draft programme aims and learning outcomes and programme structure for the proposed programme were tabled at a recent Academic Development Group meeting and demonstrate detailed understanding of the setting of outcomes at a level which meets the UK threshold standards and are in accordance with the academic frameworks and regulations of the awarding body.

2.4   The arrangements regarding the design, development and approval of programmes would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised further documentation, including the minutes of the Academic Development Group and Academic Board and examples from student focus groups, and met with students and staff and with representatives from the awarding body. In these meetings the team explored the level of input in programme design and development from employers and current students. In particular, the team heard from students that the applied nature of the programmes and the role of the placements was fundamental in their decision to study at the College.

2.5   The team heard that the NYA accreditation was ensured by means of the development team having Joint Negotiating Council qualified staff who were able to map module learning outcomes to the NYA requirements. Potential students are given information regarding the importance of the PSRB-accredited programme should they be considering youth work on graduation.

2.6   The careful design of programmes to integrate theory and practice, which enables students and graduates to apply their learning successfully is **good practice**.

2.7   The team also heard how students were regularly involved in improvements to programmes, for example, adjustments to a placement module on the BA (Hons) Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work). These student focus group comments were then fed into a subsequent course committee meeting. Further discussion in the meeting with senior staff confirmed that that all programmes are mapped against the Subject Benchmark Statement and, where relevant the NYA.

2.8   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that deliberative and strategic processes for the design and development of programmes enable the development of an excellent student learning experience, successfully integrating theory and practice. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.9   In line with the Collaboration Agreement and the Collaborative Delivery Plan, the College is responsible for the recruitment, selection and admission of students. Recruitment, selection and admissions processes are managed by the Admissions Manager, with oversight by the Vice-Principal (Academic).

2.10   The College has a robust Admissions Policy, which describes the processes of recruitment and selection to potential applicants via the public facing website. The College does not use UCAS in its recruitment process. Prospective students apply to their chosen programme of study using the appropriate College Application Form, which can be completed online or on paper. The College assesses the prospective student's spiritual, practical, academic and relational abilities and practice in order to assess and evaluate the individual against the set requirements for the chosen programme. The Internal Admissions Procedure provides clear guidance to College staff, including a transparent process for capturing details of students that have additional learning needs or a disability.

2.11   The College provides information on admissions via its website and through printed materials such as prospectuses, and also holds informative open days at the Christchurch campus and at its two Regional Centres. The College's approach to outreach recruitment relies heavily on the network of relationships held by the Regional Centres, and is executed strategically in reference to the Access and Participation Statement.

2.12   After applying to the College, prospective students receive an informative application letter detailing the next stages of the selection and recruitment process, including about interview and what documents they will need to bring with them. All applicants are interviewed by College staff, who follow a set of specific questions that cover academic, personal and spiritual experience of the applicant. Students the review team met reported that the process was fair and informative. The support available was highly regarded, with students stating they could gain assistance at any stage during the recruitment and selection process. All students are required to complete an online DBS form before they attend interview. If successful, the applicants have to pay a registration fee and the cost of the DBS check.

2.13   Successful applicants receive a confirmation letter of their place on the programme and information about the programme of study, including a document detailing terms and conditions. Arriving at the College, all new students participate in an Orientation Week at the Christchurch camps, providing them with a range of information including pastoral care opportunities, placements, study skills and resources available on site. The Orientation Week enables individuals to experience a smooth transition from prospective student to current student, and was said by students to be very useful but slightly repetitive at times.

2.14   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised a range of document-based evidence and met with staff and students.

2.15   Although the College has a clear policy and efficient procedures in place to recognise prior learning in new applicants, the review team found that on commencement of their programme, some non-standard entry and direct-entry students had not been fully aware of what was expected of them and had not read the necessary course-related materials due to a lack of communication from the College.

2.16   The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure that needs of non-standard and direct-entry students are identified during the admission process to ensure they are able to commence their programme on an equal basis with other students.

2.17   The application, interview and acceptance process is periodically monitored through the Course Evaluation Review process. Admission statistics are analysed as part of the Annual Provider Review in order to illuminate any long-term trends, the results of which are considered internally for widening access and participation.

2.18   The review team considers the comprehensive, robust and supportive process of selection and recruitment for admissions at the College to provide a tailored and positive experience for students. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.19   The College's strategic approach to learning and teaching practices is set out in its Learning Teaching and Assessment Framework, a document that permeates practice across all programmes and is made available to all staff and students. It is consistent with the awarding body's Strategic Plan. This is based on active learning where students take responsibility for their learning, and with a clear focus on their personal development. The learning and teaching methods are articulated in the Programme Handbooks.

2.20   A clear focus of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework is that equivalent learning opportunities are available to cater for the diverse backgrounds, attributes and learning styles of the students. As part of this, the College's programme offerings cover a range of study modes from full-time through various iterations of part-time study. Modules across different study modes enjoy identical outcome and learning hours though there may be differences in the student experience where, for example, some modules on particular study modes are delivered intensively over a short period.

2.21   A considerable proportion of the curriculum is allocated to placements, which form a core theme of all undergraduate programmes. This is based on the College's ethos that 'significant learning takes place through reflection on professional practice'. Specific programme learning outcomes relate to the demonstration of vocational suitability, general employability skills and personal, professional and spiritual self-management and these are assessed through the placement portfolio assessment.

2.22   Formative assessment is embedded into all modules and is regarded as a key enabler to student learning. Feedback expectations are published and student feedback (via the NSS) is at a high level.

2.23   The College's Quality Manual clearly sets out the required level of qualifications required of academic staff to teach at particular levels. This is supplemented by appropriate requirements for professional practice experience for those involved of the delivery of the professionally-oriented programmes. The College's Staff Development Policy sets out the requirements for the development and support of staff.

2.24   The arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements by reviewing a range of documentation including College policies and procedures, monitoring reports and relevant meeting minutes. The team also met with senior, academic and professional staff, and students.

2.25   The review team found that the College has a clear, consistent and effective approach to teaching and learning which is understood and articulated by all levels of staff. The skill and care taken by the teaching staff is also much appreciated by students.

2.26   The reflective nature of learning, reinforced by the comprehensive nature of the placements, which provides vocationally relevant enrichment to the programmes, thus greatly enhancing the students' competence in practice, is **good practice**.

2.27   All College staff are appropriately qualified for their role and possess relevant formal qualifications. In addition, a number of staff hold professional teaching qualifications, and three are Fellows of the Higher Education Academy. Individual staff development needs are identified through the annual reviews with line managers. Academic staff are given an allowance of approximately 10 per cent of their full-time load to facilitate scholarly activity, which includes conference attendance and tri-annual internal staff training sessions. This is supplemented by the Teaching Staff Further Study Policy which facilitates the study of higher degrees. Four staff are currently being supported for master's level study or above.

2.28   There is an established and beneficial peer observation of teaching process. This facilitates a constructive critique and dialogue. The results are also reported to the Vice-Principal (Academic), which provides useful management oversight. Teaching quality is also monitored by student feedback, module evaluations and the NSS.

2.29   The College aims to ensure the high quality of physical resources at its campus and Regional Centres so that they are safe and accessible for all. There is evidence of reasonable adjustments made on a case-by-case basis to various aspects of the provision to satisfy the various statutory requirements. Moreover, consideration of the quality of physical resources forms part of the programme approval process for all locations. All teaching rooms at the Christchurch campus - and most at the Regional Centres - are equipped with data projectors, smart-boards, personal computers and media-playing facilities. The College's VLE is based on Moodle and is used to support the delivery of learning opportunities as well as dissemination of information. Recent developments include the introduction of a new online library database.

2.30   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure 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. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.31   The College acknowledges its primary responsibility for the policies, procedures and practices whereby student development and achievement is enabled. Under the provisions of the validation arrangements these are subject to review and oversight by the awarding body. The expectation of the Quality Code is strongly reflected by the College's emphasis on the holistic development of the individual across intellectual, spiritual, practical and relational matters.

2.32   A culture of support has been deliberately cultivated where there are many opportunities for informal contact between staff and students to assist the latter's development. This encompasses an open-door policy for campus-based students which also translates into frequent 'virtual' opportunities for interaction as and when needed for students based at Regional Centres and placement-based students. Within this overarching strategy, all students are allocated a personal tutor and undergraduate students are also assigned to a tutor group. Formal guidance on the role and attributes of personal tutors is contained in the College's Quality Manual and undergraduates benefit from five scheduled meetings each year. There is similar provision for postgraduate students though, understandably, it is more appropriate for these students to select as and when they take advantage of the support facilities available.

2.33   The College sets out is expectations in relation to support for students with special needs through its Disability and Learning Support Policies, managed by the Learning Support department.

2.34   The College's expectations in relation to Learning Resources, including library provision, are set out in the Learning Resources Collection Development Policy. Annual review of library stock takes place against stated criteria both in relation to content and format (whether hard copy or electronic). In 2016, the awarding body terminated its arrangements for access to its online resources for students at validated partners. The College had already implemented its own plans to ensure that its students would continue to enjoy appropriate access to online resources. Increasing its stock of online resources remains a priority.

2.35   All students are provided with induction to their programmes which supplements the information provided during the admissions process. Areas covered include academic ethos, pastoral care arrangements, study skills and the expectations of the programme and levels of study.

2.36   The College also offers targeted support for those with particular pastoral needs through the chaplains. These provide a specialist service in light of their qualifications and experience and operate independently from the College's management structures to ensure confidentiality.

2.37   Individual professional development is stated to be at the heart of all of the College's programmes. In order to facilitate and support the achievement of these outcomes for undergraduate programmes, placements form a core element and provide an appropriate environment for reflection on professional practice. In addition, particular modules are designed with outcomes relating to spirituality, leadership, teamwork and the general

development of 'character'. Professional Advisory Groups, comprising relevant practitioners and employers, are used as important reference benchmarks for the relevance and fitness for purpose of the College's programmes.

2.38   In addition to the overall College structures governing the opportunities for professional development of its students, further support for careers is offered through the 'Jobs Database' of employment opportunities, the expertise of College staff, along with mock interviews and assistance with CVs provided within the curriculum.

2.39   The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements by examining student support policies, procedures, and relevant meeting minutes. The team also met with students along with senior, teaching and professional staff.

2.40   The undergraduate tutor groups, which operate for the campus-based students, are regarded as one of the College's unique selling points. Each group has one male and one female tutor and the group meets for two hours each week, supplemented by ad hoc activity. The tutor groups have a pastoral role and also provide a network of community and friendship across year groups, and are located outside the formal curriculum. Relationships are developed through social and spiritual activities, leading to the creation of a supportive network, which in turn improves retention rates. The tutor groups are well-regarded by students. Other mechanisms of personal tutoring operate for the placement-based students.

2.41   All Learning Support staff are appropriately qualified. This support extends to that given to students who fail an assignment, who are offered personal review sessions and strategies to tackle future assignments. Students are alerted to this through the comprehensive Programme Handbooks. The College has a history of recruiting a high proportion of students with disabilities, and these students appear to be well served by the College's processes as evidenced by positive student feedback and termly reviews of the learning support provision.

2.42   A Pastoral Strategy Team has recently been formed, meeting four times per year, comprising four tutors of which two are located on campus and the others off campus, along with two students. This initiative is to provide a strategic and structured element to pastoral support to supplement the existing arrangements. Students the review team met were universal in their praise for the support and guidance given to them by the College, both in their personal development, and in academic and pastoral support. The College takes great care to support its students to ensure they can develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

2.43   The multi-layered support structures, which enable students to develop fully their academic, personal and professional potential, is **good practice**.

2.44   The College's VLE is used by academic staff as a tool to support student learning. Teaching staff upload lesson plans and assessment information which students can access remotely. The College regularly monitors the resources made available to students on the VLE. Students who the review team met indicated that they value these online resources.

2.45   The review team heard from students that there is no system in place to prevent books being removed from the library without being formally checked out. This can have the effect that some books, referred to on the online database as present in the library, are not available when students then visit the campus to access them. The College is aware of the issue and is considering ways to resolve it.

2.46   The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensures that the system for managing library resources enables students to have appropriate and timely access to

those learning resources.

2.47   The review team also noted that while programme induction for students is generally comprehensive and effective, there have been instances where students joining programmes at later stages have not been provided with sufficient advance information and this has hampered a smooth transition to study.

2.48   The review team therefore **recommends** that the College review the arrangements for induction and ongoing transition, including progression between defined levels of study and for students who begin at different points in the academic cycle, to ensure all students are able to successfully progress and complete their programme.

2.49   The review team considers that overall the College has a comprehensive system of student support in place which is regularly monitored and evaluated. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.50   Student engagement is deeply embedded in the College's ethos and culture, providing students with sufficient opportunities to be engaged as partners in the process of quality assurance, enhancement, and the monitoring and review of their programmes through the utilisation of the Student Representation Association.

2.51   Students are provided with a Student-College Contract at the beginning of their relevant programmes, which sets out the College's expectations of the students, and what the student can expect of the College in return. The Contract forms a platform to build a successful, professional relationship between staff and student, and provides a reference point for all stakeholders in progressing through the stated period of study.

2.52   The College defines student engagement and the function of the Student Representation Association in the Student Representative Policy, which can be located in all Programme Handbooks. Routes through which students can engage in the management of quality standards can also be found within their relevant programme specifications.

2.53   The Student Representative Policy is introduced to students during Orientation Week and within three academic weeks of this student representatives are nominated and appointed. Student representatives receive informative training on their role and responsibilities in engaging with the College on a formal level. They are invited to sit on institutional level meetings including on Course Committees, Academic Board, and to represent the student body at the College's Board of Trustees.

2.54   The Student Representative Associations follow the ethos of the College's Christchurch Campus Community Council (the 'Four Cs'). The Four Cs focus on the social and spiritual well-being of the students and student representatives are encouraged to follow the Four Cs when engaging with the College during academic and quality processes as well as when raising any pastoral issues that may occur.

2.55   The arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements by scrutinising a range of documents, and held meetings with staff, students, including student representatives who confirmed that the College supports them fully in their engagement with College processes. Students have access to external examiner reports through the VLE and have the opportunity to engage with action plans via the student representation structure at course committee meetings.

2.56   The College has implemented a range of forums for students to be able to feedback to staff including module evaluation forms, which enable students to give anonymous feedback concerning the delivery, learning and engagement they experience during each module on their relevant programmes. Information from these is then fed into module review processes and discussed at course committee meetings. Students also complete Learning Support Provision Feedback and are invited to participate in the NSS.

2.57   Students who the review team met said that library facilities at the College supported them with their assessments most of the time. However, there were occasions when texts have not been available within the library, despite the online booking system showing that the book is available to loan. The College has acknowledged that it is aware that this as a problem, and it is looking into ways to ensure that an accurate record of the

stock is available to students at all times, in order to ensure that students are able to access key texts during, and that learning experience and assessment outcomes are not affected by inability to access key texts.

2.58   The review team considers that through these robust processes of student engagement, the College defines, creates and maintains a supportive and productive environment for students to complete their programmes. With an ethos that aspires to bring about demonstrable enhancement to the learning environment, the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience, the College engages with students as partners on an institution-wide level. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.59   The awarding body has ultimate responsibility for appointing external examiners and has oversight of the assessment processes at the College, including the management of the Board of Examiners. The awarding body scrutinises the standard of assessments, which are designed and compiled by the College, in order to approve programmes during validation processes. Under the partnership arrangements, the College is responsible for setting assignments, for first and second marking, for providing staffing for assessment and for feedback for students.

2.60   The College has a robust assessment design process whereby proposed assignments are considered by the Assessment Scrutiny Panel, which reports to the Academic Board, and which has authority to approve minor changes to assessments. Major changes to assignments require the consideration of the awarding body and the external examiner.

2.61   Assessment processes are aligned to the Quality Code and are conducted in line with the College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Framework. All assessments at the College are considered formative in nature, even if they are technically summative. This approach secures a rigorous assessment culture among the student body. All assessment content is formulated by the module team and submitted to the Assessment Scrutiny Panel for consideration, who ensure assignment tasks are developed at the appropriate level and provide students with the opportunity to meet relevant criteria to gain credit.

2.62   The arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised a range of documents and met staff and students.

2.63   Harmonising with the assessment procedures of the awarding body as detailed within its Assessment Handbook, external examiners sit on the Assessment Scrutiny Panel, alongside the awarding body's Link Tutor, to monitor the development of assessments.

2.64   Programme specifications detail assessment criteria and module specifications present the assessment criteria for students. A copy of these is available to students within the Programme Handbooks, accessible to students through the VLE, which enables students to have remote access to other key documents also.

2.65   The College executes a valid and reliable processes of assessment, ensuring marking and moderation processes are transparent and fair. All work is internally moderated, and samples are then scrutinised by an external examiner. Reports on assessment by the external examiner are initially sent to the Vice Principals (Academic), and are then considered at Course Committee Meetings, which are attended by student representatives.

2.66   Recognition of prior learning enables every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit being sought. The College acknowledges the validity of the recognition of prior learning in its Admissions

Policy. The College uses recognition of prior learning regularly to manage transfers between programmes and to admit students who have previously completed levels 4 or 5 at other institutions.

2.67   The College works to seek an attainable balance of work across the academic year for students, aiming to ensure they can achieve awards successfully while aiming to mitigate the risk of plagiarism or unauthorised collusion. To further support students in the assessment process, the College employs its 'Targeted Pastoral Support' process to capture learners who may require additional support or assistance in meeting deadlines. When meeting with students at the College, the review team found that the pastoral support was extremely valued by students. Some students reported a lack of communication when starting at the College at level 5, and had not received an accurate reading list, and therefore were not fully prepared to commence their studies at the College on a level with students who had studied at the College in the previous academic year.

2.68   The College has acknowledged that feedback to students has not always been provided in a timely manner. The Academic Board has monitored this issue closely over the last two academic years and have found that this still requires attention and monitoring within the College. When meeting with students and staff at the College, the review team found that this issue has been actioned, and that students had seen a positive improvement.

2.69   The review team considers that the College has robust policies, procedures and practices in place to design, review and monitor assessment processes and outcomes, engaging with the student body effectively to achieve this. The highly regarded student support system in place enables students to achieve assessment outcomes in varying circumstances, both at the Christchurch campus and Regional Centres through the use of placement supervisors. The College has acknowledged issues surrounding assessment turnaround times and has shown that actions have been taken to ensure these issues no longer impact the student experience. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.70   The College states that external examiners are at the heart of the assessment process. External examiners are proposed by the College but are formally appointed by the awarding body, and therefore are entirely independent of the College. The awarding body governs all aspects of the process, including setting and implementing relevant policies, providing training and induction for external examiners, chairing the Boards of Examiners and managing reporting processes.

2.71   The College assumes full responsibility for the external examining process of the Foundation Year given that this is outside the formal remit of the awarding body. A revised policy has recently been developed and approved covering all the requirements of the Quality Code. Students receive appropriate information on the details of external examiners and their role through the Programme Handbooks.

2.72   External examiners submit annual reports to the awarding body for FHEQ levels 4 to 7, and to the College for the Foundation Year. The reporting templates cover relevant criteria including identification of good practice and areas for further development. External examiner reports form an integral part of the annual Course Evaluation Review process. They are discussed at the relevant Couse Committee and an action plan is then agreed at programme level and progress measured through regular reviews during the year. External examiner reports are then published on the VLE, accessible by students.

2.73   As well as commenting on the rigour of the assessment process and standards achieved by students, external examiners also meet with students, offer views on the management of academic standards, the currency of the curriculum and highlight any concerns.

2.74   The arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team examined external examiner reports, minutes of relevant meetings and annual Course Evaluation Reports. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff, and students. Staff were able to clearly articulate processes for the involvement of external examiners in the assessment procedures and the consideration of the annual reports. External examiner reports considered by the review team revealed satisfaction with the process and commended the College for its marking and moderation processes.

2.75   The review team considers that the College engages with the external examining process in a positive way and has a well-established and effective system for responding to external examiner reports and comments. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.76   The Responsibilities Checklist indicates that the awarding body is responsible for annual monitoring and periodic review of the provision, and the College is responsible for academic standards and regular review of programmes. The College works within these parameters and uses them to facilitate its own goals in the area of assuring and enhancing the academic quality of its provision. (See also Expectation A3.3) The College's Quality Manual outlines the processes involved and responsibilities for the various aspects of monitoring and review.

2.77   End of module student reviews are carried out for all modules. At programme level annual Course Evaluation Review has replaced the former Annual Programme Monitoring Report. Course Committees discuss and sign off issues arising from the Course Evaluation Review reports and action plan, which are then submitted to the awarding body for response. External examiner reports are considered as part of the Course Evaluation Review process and student feedback is considered at modular and programme level and through student representation on Course Committees. Detailed quantitative student retention, achievement and progression data are also discussed at Course Committees as part of the Course Evaluation Review process. The College's processes are overseen by the Academic Board through its receipt of minutes and the reports and action plans, and the Academic Board may identify further actions in response. These processes are supplemented by input from the College teaching team and the Regional Centres management groups.

2.78   A periodic Partnership Review was carried out in 2015 by the awarding body, in line with the provision set out in the Collaboration Agreement and Collaborative Delivery Plan Course Evaluation Review reports fed into the Partnership Review, together with the outcomes of the QAA HER (Plus) 2014 and the PSRB review, both of which had taken place during the period under review. All programmes delivered at the College underwent revalidation concurrently with the partnership review and were revalidated for a further five years. The College's quality assurance processes were also reviewed and found to be effective. Resources, student support, and teaching and assessment were reviewed in detail. The awarding body has now changed its process to a risk-based, rather than periodic, review, but the College has requested a continuation of the current, cyclical model of review.

2.79   The arrangements in place at the College regarding regular monitoring and review of programmes would enable the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised documentation and met staff from the awarding body and the College. The meetings with senior and teaching staff confirmed that the monitoring and review processes were followed internally and by the awarding body. Teaching staff confirmed that end of module reviews are undertaken for all modules, with a summary report compiled by module teams for review by each Course Committee, which then feed into the annual Course Evaluation Review process. If a module is repeated at different times in the academic year, for instance at different locations, an additional review is carried out. Staff confirmed understanding of how programme and module-level reviews feed into the overall monitoring process undertaken by the awarding body.

2.80   The review team considers that the College has effective processes in place for the

monitoring and review of programmes. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.81   Committed to an approach in handling complaints and appeals that is fair, objective, confidential and proportionate, the College has two separate robust policies for dealing with complaints and appeals, both of which are publically accessible to all stakeholders.

2.82   The College is jointly responsible for the management of appeals and complaints with its awarding body, as stipulated with the Collaboration Agreement, aligning procedures to the Quality Code and the requirements of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

2.83   The policies and procedures in place at the College would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised documentation and met with staff and students.

2.84   The College has separate policies and procedures to address different types of complaints: non-academic issues are assigned to the Complaints Procedure, and academic complaints, which may lead to an appeal, are dealt with via the Academic Appeals Procedure. Procedures for academic appeals are found within the Programme Handbooks, which are available to all students via the VLE. Both procedures provide students with information on what steps to take if they are unsatisfied with an element of their experience when studying at the College.

2.85   Aiming to deal with all complaints informally initially, the College provides students with a range of platforms though which to communicate concerns and work as partners in resolving any problems in a timely manner. Students can raise issues via the Student Representative Committee or may contact the appropriate member of staff, such as a Programme Leader. When meeting with students, the review team found that students take advantage of the College's open-door policy, and students provided several examples of issues that have been resolved at an informal level. Staff at the College provided a similar response, suggesting that the strong student-staff relationships provided multiple informal opportunities for problems to be discussed and actioned. The review team found that this informal approach is effective in practice and produces immediately satisfactory result for students. However, the College does not record these informal discussions and is, therefore, unable to monitor trends that may occur year on year with different groups of students.

2.86   The review team therefore **recommends** that the College develop a mechanism for identifying and recording informal complaints to enable effective monitoring.

2.87   If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of an informal resolution, they have the right to pursue a formal complaint. Students must follow the Complaints Procedure and fill out a complaints form, which can be obtained confidentially via the VLE. A Resolution Officer will then take the complaint forward to the Complaint Resolution Panel, which includes a student representative, if it is not possible to resolve the situation immediately with mediation. The decision of the panel results in a Completion of Procedures letter being sent to all relevant parties.

2.88   The Academic Appeals Procedure enables students to request the review of a decision by a Board of Examiners regarding the result of an assessment, or the assignment

of an award. In consultation with their Programme Leader, a student can consider if there are grounds for an academic appeal, and if the issue can be resolved on an informal level. If this is not achievable, the student must inform the Vice-Principal (Academic) in writing with their intention to appeal, and submit an academic appeal form within 10 working days. An Academic Appeals Panel then considers the case and works with the awarding body in negotiating an appropriate outcome. If there are grounds for appeal, the case will be forwarded to the Academic Appeals Group, and is considered further by the Board of Examiners.

2.89   The review team considers that staff and students confirmed a thorough understanding of both policy and procedure for making, processing and handling appeals and complaints. Documentation reinforces that the College provides clear and transparent information, advice and guidance to students. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.90   While the College is not a degree-awarding body, the Expectation applies with regard to the way in which the College provides placement opportunities for its higher education students and to a service relationship the College has at its South West Regional Centre. The College outsources some aspects of the pastoral support provided to students based at its South West Regional Centre to South West Youth Ministries. This activity is the subject of a formal legally binding contract.

2.91   Placements are part of all higher education programmes at the College, with specific programme learning outcomes relating to the demonstration of vocational suitability, general employability skills and personal, professional and spiritual self-management (see also Expectations B1 and B3). All practice modules are supported by a Placement Manager and Placements Administrator based at the main campus at Christchurch, plus a Centre Manager based at each Regional Centre. Each student on placement has a College-approved supervisor, employed by the placement provider. Criteria for the approval of a suitable placement are clearly laid out. The placement provider application form and placement provider information packs give detail regarding the types of placement the students undertake. The College has a Fitness to Study procedure which can be invoked if a member of staff or a placement provider has doubts regarding a student's fitness to undertake or continue a placement.

2.92   Applicants for the undergraduate programmes can select whether to be campus or placement based. Campus-based students, all of whom are based at the main Christchurch campus, attend their placement at a local church or project a few times every week. Placement-based students, who can study at the main Christchurch campus or at either of the Regional Centres, work and fulfil placement activities in a suitable location while attending the Christchurch campus or Regional Centre for taught sessions. Three five-day study blocks are run at the Christchurch campus which brings together placement-based students from all locations and students are also taught via a number of study blocks (typically between four and five days long) at each student's chosen Regional Centre. In addition, campus-based students undertake an intensive five-week block placement within the UK in year 1 (level 5) and a further five-week block placement in the UK or overseas in year 2 (level 6).

2.93   The College monitors the placements through a year-long process, culminating in a practice modules annual report. These are detailed and include student and supervisor feedback for the different placement types. Mid-point assessments are also undertaken, with reports detailing activities undertaken, reflective self-assessment and feedback from the appropriate member of staff. These assessments feed into the student portfolio which forms the overall assessment of the practice modules (see also Expectation B6).

2.94   The arrangements in place at the College for managing provision with others would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised documentation, including mid-point and end of year placement reports, and held meetings with placement providers and supervisors, teaching staff and students. The team heard how the College aims to ensure that students' placements provide suitable

opportunities for development and progression by gleaning details of students' previous experience and skills on application and at interview.

2.95   Where students come to the College with a potential placement, the College assesses the placement provider and its suitability as a placement, in particular to ensure the potential for sufficient development in the student. The review team heard that equity of standards and student experience across all placements is an area of challenge for the College. The College works with tutors, placement supervisors and the students to ensure support is in place and student feedback gleaned effectively.

2.96   Mid and end-of-year supervisors' reports, including student reflection, feed into the student placement portfolio, with the reports providing 30 per cent of the overall module grade. Students confirmed the importance of the placements to their overall experience, citing the constant preparation for life beyond college through the clear linkage of theory to practice, and that regular feedback and the formative mid-year assessment enabled progress to be clearly identified.

2.97   The review team considers that the College has appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place to manage the quality of learning provision delivered with others. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable
Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.99   All Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all cases.

2.100   There are three elements of good practice and five recommendations in this judgement area.

2.101   The review team identified areas of good practice in relation to the careful design of programmes integrating theory and practice, the reflective nature of learning reinforced by the comprehensive nature of the placements, and the multi-layered support structures which enable students to develop fully their academic, personal and professional potential. Recommendations relate to ensuring that the needs of direct-entry and non-standard entry students are identified during the admission process, to review the arrangements for induction and ongoing transition, to developing a mechanism for identifying and recording informal complaints, and to ensure that the system for managing library resources enables students to have appropriate and timely access to learning resources.

2.102   The College has appropriate policies and procedures in place for ensuring the quality of the student learning experience, including where this involves the management of learning provision delivered with others. The recommendations concern minor oversights in the College's policies and procedures, which do not present any serious risks to the student learning experience.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Reviewing all published information in partnership with the awarding body, the College's Academic Board and Senior Management Team are responsible for the content of publications about the learning opportunities available at the College. The College has an Information Policy, which is clear but brief. All information offered to prospective and current students complies with the appropriate guidance: by providing transparent references within the terms and conditions to course changes or changes in information after an offer of a place on a programme is made.

3.2 Prospective students can access information about the College online via the website, in prospectuses and in other printed materials. These portals provide comprehensive information on the programmes offered by the College, the nature of the College itself, application procedures, entry requirements and details of tuition fees, and provide access to a range of institutional policies.

3.3 The College has a public facing website providing information to all stakeholders, which aligns with the requirements of the Competitions and Marketing Authority (CMA). The College website details the admissions process and entry requirements, an overview of courses with specific reference to annual fees and associated costs, and provides guidance to current students; the difference between the annual course fee and the Student Loans Company contribution is discussed during interviews.

3.4 Applicants receive an admissions letter, detailing the interview and selection process at the College, what documents the applicant needs to bring, and contact information for the admissions assistant at the College if any advice is required. Students who are successfully recruited onto a programme at the College receive an offer letter. The College provides students with relevant information before they arrive at the College; this includes terms and conditions of the student-college contract, academic and pastoral support services, and relevant handbooks.

3.5 Once at the College, students can access all policies and procedural documents through the VLE. Students are provided with two handbooks: the College Life Handbook and the Programme Handbook, both of which are approved by the Academic Board. The College Life Handbook informs students of the expectation the College has of student conduct and describes the ethos of community life. The Programme Handbook is specific to the programme of study and provides information on assessment, student representation and links to definitive documentation, including the terms and conditions between the College and the student, and external examiner reports.

3.6 Students and staff are provided with programme specifications, which provide a formal reference point for all information concerning assessment, detailing the structure of the relevant programme, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Placement supervisors are supplied with detailed information about their role and responsibilities in supporting student achievement through their experience, and how it feeds into assessment.

3.7   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including web pages, and met with students and staff.

3.8   Meetings with students confirmed that the information they are provided with regarding their programme is accurate and clear. The review team heard that some direct-entry and non-standard entry students did not feel fully prepared when they started at the College as they did not receive enough guidance on what work was required of them before they commenced their programme.

3.9   Students who met the review team said unanimously that communication between the College, placement supervisors and students could be better, and that the level and quality of feedback provided by placement supervisors varied considerably. The College has acknowledged this and is working on ways in which this can be addressed.

3.10   The review team found that insufficient priority is given to ensuring that the College's Information Policy is implemented consistently and that there are some shortcomings in terms of the rigour in which it is applied. In meetings with students and with staff, the review team found that information is not always communicated clearly to the student body through the various platforms the College has established. The review team heard that the College relies heavily on oral communication or on one-to-one communication. Many students indicated they had experienced confusion at various stages of their relationship with the College, whether that was as a prospective student or as a current student.

3.11   The review team therefore **recommends** that the College review, revise and implement the Information Policy to ensure the effective communication of information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.12   The review team considers that, overall, the College has procedures in place to manage information about the higher education it offers that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. However, more thought could be given to the methods used to convey information, and how this might impact on the consistency of the information provided and how it is interpreted. The Expectation is, therefore, met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.14   The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

3.15   There is one recommendation in this judgement area.

3.16   The review team identified a recommendation in relation to the College's Information Policy, and that more thought could be given to the methods used to convey information and how these might impact on the consistency of the information provided and how it is interpreted.

3.17   The College has appropriate policies and procedures in place for ensuring the information about learning opportunities. The recommendation concerns oversights in the College's policy and related procedures that do not present any serious risks to the quality of the information about learning opportunities.

3.18   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College's Enhancement Policy reflects an institutional ethos of continuous improvement led at institutional level by the Academic Board, through the Student Journey Enhancement Group. The role of the latter is to analyse data streams arising from the NSS and Teaching Excellence Framework metrics and make recommendations for further improvements to the student learning experience and opportunities. The group also contains student representation.

4.2 Enhancement activity is then monitored through standing agenda items on meetings of the Academic Board and the Course Committees. In addition to this 'top-down' approach, Course Committees are encouraged to flag issues arising at programme level to the Academic Board and this is likely to arise during the Course Evaluation Report process.

4.3 Quality assurance procedures are used to identify opportunities for enhancement of the curriculum and the current format for Course Evaluation Reports contains an 'Annual Statement of Enhancement' whereby suitable examples can be identified.

4.4 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. To test the effectiveness of the arrangements, the review team scrutinised the documentation provided on enhancement strategy, policies, committee structures, minutes of meetings and action plans, all referred to above. The review team also met with senior, teaching and professional support staff to discuss the College's approach to Enhancement.

4.5 The review team identified a number of enhancements including new modes of delivery to widen access to the College's programmes; the introduction of online procedures for the submission of assignments, marking and moderation, and the provision of feedback to students; the setting up of the new Student Representation Association from September 2017; and changes in the pattern of the timetable following student observations.

4.6 Despite this activity and the clearly embedded ethos of continuous improvement, the review team found that the College's response to the requirement for a provider-level approach is not wholly systematic and staff understanding of the nature of, and overall responsibility for, enhancement is not entirely consistent. By way of example, no mention of the Enhancement Policy was made during responses to enhancement-related questions in any of the meetings.

4.7 The review team therefore **recommends** that the College develop further and articulates the provider-level strategy for enhancement to ensure a more deliberative and consistent approach to enhancing the student learning opportunities.

4.8 The review team considers that the College is aware of the importance of enhancement and has demonstrably taken deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities appropriate to its context of operation and size. However, there is a lack of clarity of the strategic approach to enhancement at provider level and leadership responsibilities for the process. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.10   The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.11   There is one recommendation in this judgement area.

4.12   The review team identified that the College is very aware of the importance of enhancement and has taken deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities, but there is lack of clarity in the strategic approach to enhancement and that the College could therefore develop further and articulate the provider-level strategy for enhancement. The recommendation concerns minor oversights in the College's policies and procedures that do not present any serious risks to the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

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

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

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

term in our review processes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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