



# Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

April 2016

## Contents

<b>About this review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key findings.....</b>	<b>3</b>
QAA's judgements about Navitas UK Holdings Ltd .....	3
Theme: Digital Literacy.....	3
Financial sustainability, management and governance .....	4
<b>About Navitas UK Holdings Ltd .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Explanation of the findings about Navitas UK Holdings Ltd .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies .....	7
2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities .....	18
3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities .....	33
4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities .....	36
5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacies .....	39
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>41</b>

## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Navitas UK Holdings Ltd. The review took place from 4 to 25 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of six reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Catherine Fairhurst
- Dr Carol Vielba
- Ms Gillian Butler
- Professor Alan Jago
- Professor Anne Peat
- Mr Stuart Cannell (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Navitas UK Holdings Ltd and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> 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 (Embedded Colleges) 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
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that Navitas UK is taking or plans to take.

This review included visits to each of the embedded colleges of the Navitas group:

- Birmingham City University International College
- Cambridge Ruskin International College
- Edinburgh International College
- Hertfordshire International College
- International College Robert Gordon University
- International College Wales Swansea
- London Brunel International College
- International College Portsmouth
- Plymouth University International College.

Maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered by the embedded colleges on behalf of degree-awarding bodies was found to **meet** expectations at each of the embedded colleges. The quality of student learning opportunities was found to **meet** UK expectations at:

- Edinburgh International College
- Plymouth University International College

---

<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

and was **commended** at:

- Birmingham City University International College
- Cambridge Ruskin International College
- Hertfordshire International College
- International College Robert Gordon University
- International College Wales Swansea
- London Brunel International College
- International College Portsmouth.

The quality of information about student learning opportunities was found to **meet** UK expectations at each of the embedded colleges.

The full findings are given in separate reports on each embedded college.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on Navitas UK's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 3. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

In reviewing Navitas UK Holdings Ltd the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Digital Literacy and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and Navitas UK is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

---

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes:

[www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106)

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):

[www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Navitas UK Holdings Ltd (Navitas UK).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by itself and on behalf of degree awarding bodies **meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Navitas UK Holdings Ltd.

- The Centre of Excellence in Admissions which underpins the sound administration of the recruitment process (Expectation B2).
- The oversight, monitoring and coordination of learning opportunities and teaching practices across the network which enables consistency and enhancement of student learning opportunities (Expectation B3).
- The Independent Learning Charter which enshrines Navitas UK's commitment to its values and practices, enabling students to develop their academic and personal potential (Expectation B4).
- The provision of the Interactive Learning Skills and Communication (ILSC) modules which prepare students effectively for transition to university study (Expectation B4).
- The Student in Jeopardy programme which identifies student needs and provides the support required to enable them to succeed (Expectation B4).
- Navitas UK's framework for responsive, flexible and timely feedback on students' work, which contributes to effective learning (Expectation B6).
- The explicitness, clarity and transparency of Navitas UK's Assessment Regulations which meet the needs of a variety of audiences (Expectations B6 and C).
- The college Enhancement Teams which ensure students have a significant role in enhancement within each college (Enhancement).
- The facilitation and exchange of good practice across embedded colleges through conferences, the Centre for Excellence and other networking initiatives, which enhances the student learning experience (Enhancement).

### Theme: Digital Literacy

The review team found that Navitas UK's Virtual Learning Strategy demonstrates a commitment to enhancing student learning through electronic platforms and that students are confident in accessing learning resources both through the college network's VLE and through those of its partner universities. Despite different levels of competence, students are well supported to develop their skills, not least through Navitas UK's cross-college module Interactive Learning Skills and Communication which operates at each relevant academic level and contains an element of digital literacy skills training. Students are also introduced to plagiarism-detection software, although this is used only to a limited extent for learning and teaching purposes.

Some professional development is supplied to staff by Navitas UK and some colleges of the network have IT champions to support staff in developing their use of virtual technology in teaching. While some examples of innovation were evident, there remains work to be done to embed digital learning in the curriculum.

## Financial sustainability, management and governance

Navitas UK Holdings Ltd has satisfactorily completed the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review](#) (Embedded Colleges).

## About Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

Navitas Ltd was founded in Perth, Western Australia and is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange. Since 1994 it has built a global network of 34 university partnership colleges across four continents. The University Partnerships Division of the business has been operating in the UK since 2000. Since the first partnership with the University of Hertfordshire, a further eight colleges have been added, with a ninth opening in October 2016.

The group's mission statement emphasises the creation of opportunities through lifelong learning and expresses its aim to 'being a global leader in delivering better learning solutions'. Within the UK it aims to be the 'most trusted partner in delivering University degree pathways', in the first instance for international students. The integrated degree pathways it offers include stages delivered by Navitas UK and later stages delivered by each university partner, to provide an educational continuum, a seamless study experience leading to a degree of the partner university. Each college is listed by the Home Office as 'an embedded College delivering integrated programmes' on the partner university's sponsor licence for the assigning of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies. The colleges deliver FHEQ Level 3 (Foundation level) and replicate FHEQ 4 at undergraduate level. They also deliver postgraduate FHEQ Level 6/7 (pre-master's). All students beginning studies at the embedded colleges are registered as students of the partner university on a specific university degree programme and on successful completion of the college-delivered and university-approved stages are progressed to the next stage of the degree programme. Students assessed as eligible under the entry regulations agreed with the university receive an unconditional offer for the entire degree pathway.

Since the last QAA review, the Navitas UK Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-2018 was developed. This has been comprehensively mapped against the QAA Quality Code and embeds Navitas's five strategic aims relating to the student experience; academic key performance indicators; promoting staff development; the continuous enhancement of quality and standards; and protecting Navitas UK policies and regulations. The Learning and Teaching Strategy has provided a framework for developing other enhancements such as the Virtual Learning Strategy, Enhancement Strategy and Learning Charter.

Other changes include the appointment of a new Executive General Manager and the approval by UK Visas and Immigration of each UK college as an exceptional arrangement on the partner university licence in the form of an embedded college delivering integrated programmes. Two new partnerships have been formed, with Birmingham City University and with the University of Northampton.

Key challenges for the network include the unpredictability of the external environment and the increasingly competitive international student market within the UK and across the globe. Navitas aims to meet the latter challenge by a clear focus on quality and commitment to a robust continuous improvement process, ensuring that satisfied students will be effective ambassadors. In order to realise the benefits of recent growth, Navitas UK seeks to enter a period of consolidation.

Navitas UK considers that it has addressed all the recommendations arising from the last QAA review. The action plan was monitored regularly by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), with progress reported to the Senior Management Team (SMT). Action following from the one advisable recommendation, relating to trans-national education (TNE) activities by International College Wales Swansea, is covered in the current review report of that college. There were four recommendations relating to international collaborative partners, with reference to approval of partnerships, programme approval, programme monitoring, assessment moderation and accuracy of information. These were resolved by a directive embargoing TNE activities and this action was subsequently recognised by QAA. The further recommendation, related to working with partner universities to provide students with formal recognition of modules passed; this has been addressed. The 2012 report also identified six features of good practice. These are being developed through the continuous improvement work of the LTC. Monitoring reports since 2012 indicate commendable progress against the action plan.

## Explanation of the findings about Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

## **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies**

**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 Navitas UK manages the consistency of academic standards of its programmes to meet the UK threshold standards and align with the FHEQ levels 4-6. Partner universities set the standards for the colleges' programmes through their own academic frameworks and regulations. Navitas maps all its programmes/pathways to those of the universities, the FHEQ, Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework and the Quality Credit Framework levels. The Subject Benchmark Statements for Level 4 studies and pre-master's programmes are considered at the approval stage with the partner university.

1.2 The Quality Manual describes the academic quality and standards framework. This manual contains templates for the Definitive Module Document and the standard programme specification for colleges. These address the requirements of the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and other external reference points. Standards are reviewed annually by college Learning and Teaching Boards or Committee, and monitored by the Navitas Quality and Standards Office (QaSO).

1.3 The partner universities register all students on their programmes. The university awards the qualification. Neither the colleges nor Navitas UK assign credit values to modules. Following a recommendation from the 2012 Embedded College Review for



Educational Oversight by QAA, students now have formal recognition of modules passed. This includes credit and any appropriate exit award.

1.4 All Navitas programmes contain Navitas UK devised compulsory module interactive Learning and Communications Skills (ILSC) which is benchmarked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment at B2 level.

1.5 Navitas UK's approval process would allow Expectation A1 to be met.

1.6 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of approval and review documents from Navitas UK, external examiner reports and discussions with staff from Navitas UK, the colleges and universities.

1.7 External examiners at the colleges and partner university link tutors report that learning outcomes are met and academic standards are at appropriate levels. Navitas UK has oversight of the standards of the colleges' provision through the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) and annual monitoring reports, which further assures the maintenance of academic standards. Staff are knowledgeable about the academic standards relating to programmes and students are aware of their programmes' academic standards and regulations.

1.8 Navitas UK's central policies and processes both in principle and practice enable the Expectation to be met. The well established relationships with the partner universities and robust systems mean the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.9 Navitas UK has a UK Quality Manual that outlines the academic governance structure. During the localisation process, each College is expected to align their academic framework with that of the partner university, using the UK Quality Manual as a template. Navitas UK has a range of policies and regulations that the college Principal/Director also aligns with that of the respective partner university. These include policies and regulations relating to learning and teaching, assessment, and monitoring. The QaSO is kept informed of all localised policies and regulations, including where an amendment has occurred.

1.10 Within Navitas UK's assessment regulations it stipulates that each college must have a two-tier formal process to agree assessment outcomes. A module panel will meet to confirm marks at module level, followed by a progression board that will make the decision with regard to the progression of students to the next stage of study within the College.

1.11 Navitas UK's approach in creating templates of all appropriate policies and regulations, then overseeing how this is localised to each College, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team examined all relevant documents, including Navitas UK's policy and regulation framework and each of the colleges' localised policies and regulations. Furthermore, the team held meetings with the CEO and senior staff of Navitas UK and subsequent visits with each college.

1.13 The review team found that each College follows their respective localised policies and regulations and that there was no misunderstanding in what was expected. Furthermore, each student met by the team was aware of what was expected of them in respect of assessment and progression.

1.14 The review team found that Navitas UK fulfils its obligations in respect of the Quality Code's requirements for academic standards. Therefore, the Expectation is 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**

1.15 The programme specification is the definitive record of each programme which contains all relevant information, including the intended learning outcomes and progression pathway information. Definitive module documents (DMDs) contain all relevant information relating to each respective module, including the module outline and content detail.

1.16 These documents are reviewed annually within each college and also reviewed annually as part of the monitoring cycle within Navitas UK. Navitas UK has sufficient oversight to allow this Expectation to be met.

1.17 The review team examined all appropriate evidence, including examples of programme specifications and definitive module documents within each college. Furthermore, the team met the CEO and senior staff within Navitas UK and subsequently met staff and students at each of the colleges.

1.18 The review team found that all college staff engage effectively with the programme specifications and use them to promote discussion and reflection on new and existing programmes. The students whom the team met had a full understanding of their respective programme specification, including information on assessment criteria with specific knowledge on the credit needed for certain progression pathways.

1.19 The review team considers that Navitas UK has effective mechanisms in place to allow for the appropriate review and consideration of programme specifications and definitive module documents (this is further discussed in relation to Expectations A3.3 and B8).

1.20 The review team found that Navitas UK fulfils its obligations in respect of the Quality Code's requirements for academic standards. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.21 All new programmes and any major modifications to existing college programmes require approval by the partner university and Navitas UK.

1.22 Navitas UK has a central process for the approval and periodic review of the colleges' stages of programmes/pathways. Navitas UK gives strategic approval and approval in principle after consideration of the market and resources. The Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board and its subcommittees - AAC, Operations Advisory Committee and Marketing/Admission Planning Advisory Committee - undertake and oversees the approval processes and recommendations related to the introduction of new programmes and major modifications. The AAC approves all proposals and standards related to the introduction of programmes leading to an award. The Joint Board endorses all such approvals. The proposed programme pathway is then subject to each university's approval procedure. The universities retain validation responsibility for ensuring compliance with the FHEQ and professional benchmarks, approving module content, associated learning outcomes and assessment strategies for the programmes.

1.23 The policies and processes in place for programme approval are designed to ensure the alignment of content and assessment with the UK threshold standards contained within the FHEQ. These policies and procedures would allow Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.24 The review team considered policy and process documents relating to programme approval and modification. The review team also read documents relating to recent approvals of new programmes and changes to existing programmes. The team met staff at the embedded colleges and relevant university staff.

1.25 Navitas UK has oversight of the standards of the colleges' provision through this programme approval process set out in the quality documentation NPR QS1, and by receiving summaries of Academic Advisory Committee reports and annual monitoring reports as outlined in NPR QS2. All programmes are subject to annual monitoring and also subject to periodic review by the partner university usually every five years. Navitas UK has clear policies and procedures for programme approval. Recent examples of programme approval and programme amendments demonstrate that the processes operate effectively and as intended.

1.26 Navitas UK, with the oversight of its university partners, consistently implements appropriate processes for the approval of programme pathways that ensure they are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards. Processes are also in place to ensure that UK threshold standards continue to be met after programmes have been amended. Expectation A3.1 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**

1.27 The standards, purpose and principles of assessment are clearly set out in Navitas UK's policies and regulations. The detailed requirements in relation to the assessment of students make it clear that each student must be assessed in accordance with the approved programme specification and DMD. The Navitas UK Quality Manual sets out the governance arrangements designed to ensure quality, which provide for close scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision.

1.28 There is a pro forma for programme specifications that requires programme learning outcomes to be specified and mapped against the modules and assessment criteria. Programme specifications, including learning outcomes, assessment strategy, and whether intended learning outcomes are tested through the assessment process, are scrutinised as part of the programme approval process and required to confirm that the threshold standards are appropriate for each award and are in accordance with the FHEQ and the requirements of Subject Benchmark Statements. Navitas UK policies require that the ongoing appropriateness of assessment regimes is reviewed at annual monitoring. Some colleges follow the Navitas process, while others follow that of the partner university.

1.29 DMDs illustrate how the learning outcomes that have been defined in the programme specifications can be achieved. The DMDs detail the learning outcomes that will be assessed, the weighting of those assessments and indicate which summative assessment methods enable students to demonstrate the learning outcomes.

1.30 The Assessment Regulations require each college Learning and Teaching Board, chaired by the College Principal/Director, to operate a two-tier system of formal processes to agree assessment outcomes - college progression boards and college module panels. The regulations stipulate their respective terms of reference and composition. Progression boards have university representation and other external representation where external examiners have been appointed. College progression boards make decisions with regard to the progression of students to the next stage of study within the college and/or the partner university. College module panels confirm marks and consider the academic performance of each student on a module, as well as confirming the integrity and fairness of the assessment process including marking/grading and moderation.

1.31 In addition to the responsibilities of college Learning and Teaching Boards, student attainment is also monitored through key performance indicators applicable at all levels, including Navitas SMT. The requirements and processes documented in Navitas UK's programme regulations and Quality Manual address the academic standards of the awarding universities, UK threshold standards and the level and definition of credit. These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.32 The review team tested the systems in place by reviewing documentation in the Academic Regulations, the Quality Manual, course approval documentation, annual monitoring reports, college progression board minutes, college module panel minutes, external examiner reports, programme specifications and definitive module documents. The review team discussed assessment processes in a range of meetings with students and with staff from Navitas UK, colleges and partner universities.

1.33 The assessment regulations, and the accompanying documentation on moderation and best practice in assessment and feedback, provide detailed guidance on the process of assessment, marking, grading and moderation. The Navitas UK summary of college Enhancement Team (CET) initiatives and actions in 2014 states that all academic staff would be given training on this guidance; evidence was provided of this happening. Minutes of college module panels, college progression boards and feedback from external examiners confirmed that these boards were properly constituted, operating fairly and in accordance with their terms of reference.

1.34 DMDs seen by the review team conform to the guidance, clearly stating the intended learning outcomes and including details of the timing and type of assessment. Details of the assessments are provided in module content guides which are available in hard copy and on the colleges' virtual learning environments (VLEs). They specify which learning outcomes are being assessed within each assessment task and follow the relevant guidance. Students whom the review team met confirmed the accessibility of assessment information, were clear about their assessments and understood the feedback that they received. They did not have experience of needing to be reassessed, but were confident that, if needed, they would have an opportunity to be reassessed and that the information would be available to them.

1.35 Navitas UK's academic infrastructure and partnership agreements with validating universities provide an effective framework for the assessment of learning outcomes that is very clearly understood by staff and students. The review team concludes that credit is awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. The Expectation is therefore met and risk in this area is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.36 Navitas UK delegates responsibility for the monitoring and review of programmes to colleges and their partner universities. The Navitas UK framework and the structures and processes involved in the implementation and oversight of annual monitoring and periodic review, are described in further detail in relation to Expectation B8 of this report.

1.37 Assurance of standards is central to the aims and requirements for annual monitoring laid down by Navitas UK, whether the process employed is that of Navitas UK or the partner university. Annual monitoring is expected to check the extent to which learning outcomes are being achieved, student pass and progression rates, and the evaluations provided by external moderators and examiners. Annual monitoring reports are received and discussed within colleges and partner universities by committees responsible for academic standards and are received by Navitas UK.

1.38 Periodic review is undertaken using partner university procedures relating to the review, and where appropriate the re-approval, of collaborative provision and linked internal provision. It is expected that these processes, like initial approval, play close attention to threshold standards and alignment with the university's academic regulations.

1.39 The review team found that Navitas UK's framework for monitoring and review is designed appropriately in order to meet the Expectation.

1.40 In order to assess the effectiveness of these processes the review team looked at policy documents, committee minutes, and monitoring and review reports. The review team also met those responsible for the oversight of monitoring and review at Navitas UK.

1.41 The college annual monitoring reports seen by the review team confirm that Navitas UK's policies are implemented effectively and consistently across the college network, in all cases involving commentary on threshold standards and alignment with partner university academic frameworks. Standards are also seen to be central to discussions at periodic review. External moderators, examiners and advisers are required to comment on standards in relation to programme design and delivery, assessment, and student achievement.

1.42 Detailed statistical data is collected from the colleges by Navitas UK on pass rates, progression rates and retention rates. These measures form academic college key performance indicators. Outcomes are discussed regularly by senior management at Navitas UK. Tracer data on the progression and achievement of students once they have entered the partner university are also monitored at college and provider level.

1.43 The review team concludes that Navitas UK's framework for programme monitoring and review is effective in ensuring that Expectation A3.3 is met, and the associated risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.44 The partnership arrangements between Navitas UK and the validating universities are central to the provision of independent external advice. The partner university acts as the external for Navitas UK and is responsible for assuring academic standards by way of operational mechanisms, including programme approval, moderation and assessment boards. Navitas UK uses the term 'external' to describe any party external to the college, such as members of staff from the partner university. Additionally, Navitas UK regulations require that an independent external advisor, subject specialist or external examiner is appointed in all circumstances where the regulations of the partner university prescribe this. The college operations manuals detail the particular arrangements in each college.

1.45 Navitas UK's policy and regulations set out the requirements for the development and approval of new courses and for periodic review of existing courses. Development must be undertaken jointly with the partner university and the scrutiny panels are chaired by the partner university, operating in accordance with their arrangements for collaborative provision and respective Recognition and Articulation Agreements (RAA). Guidance on the design of programmes makes reference to the need for consistency with external reference points. Non-partner university externals are agreed with the partner university in advance, to ensure that the proposed externals are independent and can fulfil their duties without conflict of interest. Navitas UK Quality Standards Office has recently developed a Guidance on the Role of External Examiners, designed to ensure colleges' understanding of the use of external examiners. Staff development is designed to ensure understanding of the expectations of the Quality Code.

1.46 The policies and regulations of Navitas UK would allow Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.47 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing documentation and guidance in the Quality Manual, policies and regulations relating to approval, monitoring and review and the role of external examiners. The team also reviewed documentation from the colleges in relation to reports of periodic/institutional reviews and programme approvals, external examiner reports and the responses to them. Additionally the review team discussed arrangements for the involvement of external and independent expertise in a range of meetings with students and staff from Navitas UK, the colleges and partner universities.

1.48 At FHEQ Levels 3 and 4, the nature of externality varies in accordance with the agreement, expectations and regulations of the university concerned. At FHEQ Level 4 in some partnerships, university link tutors or relevant subject specialists provide externality, whereas in others it is provided by a university-appointed external examiner in accordance with the university regulations. At Level 5 and above independent external examiners are appointed from outside the University, for all modules leading to a university award, in all instances in the evidence seen.



1.49 In the case of the ILSC module which is offered at FHEQ Level 3 and Level 6/7, an external moderator is appointed by Navitas UK. This role provides the opportunity for an external perspective on standards within colleges, as well as across the network of colleges.

1.50 The external examiner and external adviser reports, and comments seen by the review team, confirm that externality is used appropriately to ensure that standards are set and maintained in accordance with threshold academic standards, that courses remain current and course learning outcomes are in line with the relevant qualification descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements. Effective monitoring and oversight of issues is provided through annual monitoring, periodic review, college Learning and Teaching Boards, college AACs and Navitas UK Quality Standards Office. There is sound evidence of responsive and thoughtful consideration of external examiners' comments.

1.51 Link tutor and external examiners, where appointed, attend college module panels and progression boards. Evidence from these panels and boards provides confirmation of standards and adherence to internal and external requirements.

1.52 Staff from the partner universities met by the review team demonstrated a robust approach to the maintenance of quality and externality at strategic, senior management and operational levels. There was no suggestion of a lack of challenge where externality was provided by the partner university.

1.53 The value of external perspectives beyond those afforded by partner universities was widely appreciated by staff whom the review team met. The review team found no evidence that existing external perspectives were insufficiently independent. However, the continuing oversight and review of this issue by Navitas UK QaSO was seen by the review team as valuable and appropriate.

1.54 The review team therefore concludes that, as Navitas UK has very clear robust procedures that are implemented effectively, Expectation A3.4 is 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: Summary of findings

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

1.56 Processes are in place to ensure that qualifications are positioned at the appropriate level of the FHEQ and level 3 equivalent and that learning outcomes align with the qualification descriptors and take account of Subject Benchmark Statements. There are appropriate and transparent frameworks and regulations in place and these are adhered to in practice. Definitive programme records are maintained following approval and any subsequent changes agreed in accordance with due processes. Design and approval processes involving Navitas UK and the awarding bodies are robust. Credit is achieved only when learning outcomes are met by students, as attested by moderators and external examiners, and programme reviews also confirm this alignment. External and independent expertise is employed at key stages to ensure the appropriate setting and maintenance of academic standards.

1.57 All seven Expectations are met with low risk. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this area. The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of academic standards at Navitas UK **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 and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 Navitas UK, the colleges and their university partners share responsibility for the development, design and approval of programmes. When developing a new programme/pathway the head of the college and a university proposer submit a strategic proposal to the Navitas UK Senior Leadership Team. When a new pathway has been granted strategic approval by Navitas UK, a draft programme specification and associated marketing material are prepared by the college. The Navitas QaSO will give initial approval in principle after considering resources. The documents are then passed to the partner university for consideration and approval. Each university's scrutiny panel, including external representation, undertakes a detailed review of the proposal and makes recommendations.

2.2 Navitas UK has appropriate systems, processes, policies and procedures in place for the design, development and approval of programmes and changes to existing programmes. These policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team looked at policy documents and college-level process documents relating to programme approval and modification. The team met staff with responsibility for programme approval. The review team also read documents relating to recent approvals of new programmes and changes to existing programmes.

2.4 The documentation produced in relation to the approval of new programmes and amendment of continuing programmes is thorough and provides a basis for assuring both the quality and standards of programmes. Staff are involved in the curriculum development stage, are aware of policies and procedures and operate them effectively. Academic staff from the partner universities are clearly involved in programme/pathway design and development to ensure students are adequately prepared for progression to a partner university degree. This was confirmed in meetings with college and partner university staff.

2.5 Navitas UK, with the support of its university partners, has appropriate policies and procedures in place for the design, development and approval of programmes at the embedded colleges in order to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

2.6 The oversight and procedures of Navitas UK, and the approval framework of the universities, ensure processes for design development and approval are applied systematically and operated consistently. Expectation B1 is therefore met and the associated level of risk in this area 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**

#### **Findings**

2.7 In all of Navitas UK partner universities, the university is the sole awarding institution. Navitas UK does not set targets, although the expectation is that colleges will grow and Navitas aims to include more UK and EU students. Regional overseas offices help to ensure diversity of entry and numbers are discussed weekly by Navitas UK.

2.8 Navitas UK has aligned its policy and operating regulations to the Quality Code with expectations and indicators as set out in Chapter B2. Navitas UK requires ethical behaviour of its agents and commits itself to a set of values which includes fairness, reliability, transparency, equity and inclusiveness. Navitas UK sees the careful recruitment and effective use of agents is key and a UK Agent Manual 2014-15 was developed in consultation with Directors of Marketing and Admissions from each UK college.

2.9 Navitas UK's marketing team in Australia ensures a consistent global brand and design of all marketing material and the involvement of Navitas UK General Manager Sales and Marketing provides a coordinated approach to the vetting of published information for applicants.

2.10 Navitas UK has introduced a comprehensive application verification process across the UK college network, using a risk-based approach to categories of markets for recruitment, a process requiring telephone or e-interviews with individual applicants in many cases. Navitas UK Director of Corporate Services along with the Head of Compliant Systems and Services, support the College network through a comprehensive UK visa compliance regime. When changes are made to central government policy, action is taken with immediate effect. The Navitas process of admissions is mapped across the whole of the colleges' network. A video was commissioned in 2013 for students, parents and agents to enhance awareness of the Home Office's credibility criteria for international students. Safeguarding Officers have been appointed in each college and the safeguarding policy is currently being reviewed.

2.11 The procedures of Navitas UK are such that the Expectation can be met.

2.12 The review team tested these procedures in practice through reading documentation and meetings with staff at headquarters and at college level, where the team also met students and analysed the materials available on websites.

2.13 Colleges use a multi-faceted approach for information delivered to prospective students - printed material, online information, recruitment fairs and virtual presentations and social media. Prospective students are directed to specific guidance on entry requirements including English language, fees, scholarships as well as Key Information Set data of the university degree. Agents are trained by Navitas UK College Marketing Teams and are appointed and managed by the UK Regional Accounts Manager.

2.14 Students applying to enter the College are assessed against the entry requirements agreed with the University for admission to the alternative entry level stages. Students are required to complete a 'statement of intent to study' to demonstrate they have a genuine

desire, so complying with the Tier 4 points-based system . The Personal Statement for low-risk countries has recently been removed. Prospective students, assessed as eligible under the agreed entry requirements, receive an unconditional offer for the entire degree pathway. Prospective students who meet the entry criteria are supplied with a comprehensive Offer Pack.

2.15 There are clear guidelines for staff and students about the process for making a complaint or an appeal against a decision made.

2.16 Since the last review by QAA, approval by UK Visas and Immigration has been granted to each UK college as an exceptional arrangement on the partner university licence under the category of embedded college delivering integrated programmes. Each college operates as an embedded college of the partner university and therefore is listed as an exceptional arrangement on the Tier 4 sponsor licence of the respective university. English language ability is governed by Tier 4 guidelines and a student will need to provide evidence of having taken one of the approved Home Office English language tests having achieved the required score in all elements. A verification checklist has been developed and is completed for all applicants and if all requirements are met, the applicant is classed as a standard. Non-standard applications are referred to the college Academic Board and where necessary referred to the university Registry or Admissions Office or Dean of the relevant school. A detailed 'COE Process Mapping Tool' registers conditional offers and tracks visa applications. College Principal/Directors localise the entry criteria documentation to relate to the college and the partner university's agreements and these are reviewed annually. Where programmes require a higher analytical skills, these requirements are made clear in the Stage Programme Specification.

2.17 The College Director of Marketing and Admissions conducts an annual audit of published material for accuracy, it is submitted to Navitas UK QaSO in January of each year.

2.18 Students whom the reviewers met confirmed the information provided is clear and easy to understand. The evidence showed the policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admissions are transparent and explicit. They confirmed that they knew how to make a complaint about a decision and gave an example of a complaint about an agent being dealt with satisfactorily.

2.19 There is evidence of staff development through the Learning and Teaching Forum enabling discussion to take place across the UK college network and the sharing of good practice among staff involved in recruitment and selection. Navitas UK is continually improving its understanding of good recruitment practices. A Community of Excellence based at Navitas headquarters are using Play Book, a systematic approach to capturing best practice activities around admissions which enables the SMT to review the admission process across UK college network, looking at admissions and conversions on individual university pathways. The Centre of Excellence on admissions, which underpins sound administration of the recruitment and admission process, is **good practice**.

2.20 The review team concludes that the 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. The Expectation is met and the risk level 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**

2.21 Navitas UK sets the framework for the provision of learning opportunities and teaching. The Navitas Learning and Teaching Strategy sets out five key strategic aims and priorities for the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices in the network of colleges. The Strategy forms an integral part of the strategic operation of an individual college, providing a foundation for internal College strategic planning by means of the College Learning and Teaching Action Plan.

2.22 The review team found that Navitas UK's framework for learning and teaching is designed appropriately in order to meet the Expectation.

2.23 In order to assess the effectiveness of this framework the review team looked at policy documents, committee minutes, annual reports, and met senior staff responsible for oversight of the policies and strategy.

2.24 Student experience is seen as central to the vision, mission and operation of Navitas UK and its colleges. In order to deliver on this, a framework containing seven key elements supporting effective teaching and learning has been set up. These include curriculum design, teaching methodology, small class sizes, study rates, moderation, teaching observation and quality assurance. The framework is monitored and reviewed in a number of ways.

2.25 Firstly, the LTC has responsibility for supporting the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. It reports to the SMT on the maintenance, development and enhancement of academic standards and the taught student learning experience. Part of its remit is to track monitor and review learning and teaching outcomes including progression and retention rates. It also undertakes the review of all learning and teaching policies and produces a series of policy and regulation guidelines. The oversight, monitoring and coordination of learning opportunities and teaching practices across the network, through the LTC and comprehensive good practice guides, is **good practice**.

2.26 Secondly, there is a Learning and Teaching Forum which aims to consolidate and disseminate good academic and student enhancement practices across the network. It achieves this by means of a regular gathering of central and college staff, with a clear area of policy and practice as its focus.

2.27 Thirdly, the Director of Student Experience and Academic Quality is responsible for the strategic direction, leadership and management of the quality and standards of both learning and teaching across the UK. This includes chairing the LTC as well as monitoring the performance of each college. The team saw evidence of the importance of the role of the Director of Student Experience and Academic Quality in coordinating learning and teaching across the network, enabling consistency and enhancement of student learning opportunities. This is particularly important where there is a new or acting Head of Centre.

2.28 Additionally, Navitas UK systematically reviews the appropriateness of its learning opportunities and teaching practices at course and college level through its programme approval and review processes. Resources to support course delivery are kept under review through the annual monitoring process. These various procedures require reference to external reference points including FHEQ. This approach to learning and teaching is also informed by the results of internal college student evaluation data and college Learning and Teaching Boards. Together they are responsible for defining, developing and reviewing learning, teaching and assessment strategies within the overall context of Navitas UK quality assurance processes.

2.29 Care is exercised in appointing appropriate staff. On appointment, they are inducted into the teaching environment including the support mechanisms in place and are assisted in understanding how their college operates within the parameters of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Academic staff are regularly observed by their managers, while some colleges also have a peer observation process in place.

2.30 There is a range of staff development opportunities available to support staff in developing teaching practice. This may be provided by the college, by the local higher education institution or by Navitas UK.

2.31 Minutes from the LTC, the Learning and Teaching Forum and associated information on course approval, plus discussions with staff provided evidence that an effective system is in place to review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices on taught courses.

2.32 The review team, therefore, is assured that Navitas UK has in place effective procedures to review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices to enable and support students to develop as independent learners and study their chosen subject. There is an important and consistent focus on the needs of students in making the transition from Navitas UK programmes into the degree programmes. Navitas UK works with all its staff and students in implementing its procedures and policies. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.33 Navitas UK takes pride in the progression rates it has achieved in the number of its students moving on to the degree programmes in their partner universities. Key to this is the quality of the student experience throughout the life-cycle from first contact to graduation.

2.34 The policies and processes are designed appropriately to meet the Expectation.

2.35 In order to assess the effectiveness of these policies and processes the review team looked at policy documents, read committee minutes and reports and met senior staff responsible for the delivery of the agreed policies.

2.36 At the admission stage there is a robust and comprehensive application verification process which seeks to ensure that students who are deemed eligible to enter the College are likely to achieve academic success.

2.37 Once on the programme the quality of student experience is central. This is achieved by adopting and embedding a number of key principles in delivering and supporting its programmes. This sets priorities in supporting students' academic and personal development, which are outlined in the Learning and Teaching Strategy. A key element of the way in which students are supported is through the provision of a 'core' comprehensive learning skills acquisition module known as the 'Interactive Learning Skills and Communication module'. The provision of this module effectively prepares students for transition to university study and is **good practice**. In addition, students receive a high quality of support from their tutors with frequent and regular tutorial meetings. The environment within which they are taught is both supportive and caring.

2.38 Navitas UK has developed a Learning Charter which sets out the ethos that drives the approach adopted to develop independent learning. This sets out the ways in which students are supported and the expectation that Navitas UK places on its students. This Charter enshrines Navitas UK's commitment to values and practices enabling students to develop their academic and personal potential and is **good practice**.

2.39 To ensure the appropriate level of student support is provided, the staff in each college continually monitor each student's academic performance and overall experience during their time with the College. Students who are underperforming are placed in the 'Student in Jeopardy' programme, and an individualised student learning plan is developed to ensure that the student receives the extra academic and general support required. The Student in Jeopardy programme, which identifies student needs and provides the support required to enable them to succeed, is **good practice**.

2.40 Navitas UK's student support policies and provision of learning opportunities are effectively designed to enable students to develop their academic and personal potential, from entry to transition into the partner university. Arrangements are monitored through a number of mechanisms which include the opportunity for student feedback. Therefore, Navitas UK meets the Expectation 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**

2.41 Navitas UK, working with its student body, has defined and promoted a range of opportunities for students to engage in quality assurance and enhancement. Student engagement is seen as central to the vision, mission and operations of Navitas and its network of colleges. Students are encouraged to be 'active' partners in their learning and in the development and management of the systems and processes that influence their learning.

2.42 Students are formally represented in two college bodies, the Student Forum and the CET. The Student Forum provides an opportunity for the student body to raise day-to-day issues on any matter related to their studies. Matters raised by the Student Forum are considered at the college Learning and Teaching Board. Most colleges have a student representative on the Board. Each college has established a CET, whose role is to develop and enhance the College student experience. The CET is seen as a 'working party' of the college's Learning and Teaching Board, and provides feedback to the college SMT.

2.43 The promotion and implementation of opportunities for student engagement are designed appropriately to meet the Expectation.

2.44 In order to assess the effectiveness of the policies and processes the review team looked at policy documents committee minutes and reports and met senior staff.

2.45 Student representatives are elected by their peers at the beginning of the semester and serve for the period of their study. Normally there is a student representative for each distinct cohort. The role of the student representative is defined and they are given training by the College Student Support Officer.

2.46 Navitas UK also undertakes four types of student survey. These include module surveys, college surveys, Navitas student satisfaction surveys, and the International Student Barometer Survey. Issues from these surveys are considered by the college Learning and Teaching Boards, and by the CET, as a result of which an action plan is prepared. This is shared with the college Student Forum. Progress on action plans is included in reports to the AAC, and in annual reports to the Navitas QaSO. Navitas UK's LTC reviews the results from all student surveys and considers areas for improvement. Feedback mechanisms to tell students what has been done with their observations includes the 'You Said, We Did' approach.

2.47 Navitas UK has recognised the need to ensure students see the value of engaging with the mechanisms which can influence their experience, especially in view of their relatively short time on Navitas programmes. The review team concludes that Navitas UK is taking deliberate steps to engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their academic experience and that, accordingly, Navitas UK meets the Expectation 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**

2.48 Navitas UK maintains a comprehensive set of academic regulations which colleges can customise in order to align with the regulations of the partner university. The Assessment Regulations and associated guidance address all aspects of assessment practice. The Quality Manual sets out the governance arrangements designed to ensure quality, which provide for close scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision. The implementation of the regulations is the responsibility of college learning and teaching boards and is monitored by the QaSO. The regulations are accompanied by a guidance document which supports the implementation of the Assessment Regulations. Procedures for the recognition of prior learning are detailed as part of non-standard entry in the admissions policy and referred to the College Academic Board.

2.49 The procedures governing assessment would allow Expectation B6 to be met.

2.50 In order to test the procedures, the review team scrutinised relevant Navitas UK and college-level regulations, policy and strategy documents, minutes of meetings, minutes of annual monitoring, assessment panels and boards, staff development resources and workshops relating to assessment, student survey data, link tutor and external examiner comments and reports. The review team met a range of staff and students in the colleges and viewed assessment-related information for students on the colleges' VLEs.

2.51 Colleges are required to operate a two-tier system of formal processes to agree assessment outcomes: college module panels and progression boards. The composition, terms of reference and process to ensure the secure recording of results are set out in the Assessment Regulations and college operations manuals. The effective operation of the regulations governing examination boards and assessment panels was confirmed in a range of reports from link tutors and external examiners as well as through annual monitoring reports.

2.52 Requirements in relation to the moderation and external examination of student work are comprehensive and there is evidence that these are implemented effectively in the Colleges. The arrangements for moderation of the ILSC module across Navitas colleges provide an additional mechanism for ensuring parity of standards in assessment.

2.53 The regulations and guidance include templates for programme specifications, definitive module documents, module guides and assessment feedback. Effective use of the framework provided by Navitas UK policies and guidance is evident in the programme specifications, definitive module documents and module guides seen by the team. These reveal an inclusive approach to assessment, designed to accommodate the diverse student needs and prepare them for summative assessments.

2.54 The Assessment Regulations require colleges to agree with their partner universities, appropriate mechanisms for defining, explaining and addressing academic misconduct. Some colleges also make use of electronic plagiarism-detection methods as a developmental tool as well as for detection. What constitutes academic misconduct and how

it differs from poor academic practice is clearly explained in the Assessment Regulations. The penalties that can be applied appear clear and proportionate. Students whom the team met felt that they had received very helpful instruction enabling them to understand the issues involved in this and progressed students were subsequently able to advise their peers on aspects of referencing. Staff are very well attuned to the particular needs of international students and the cultural differences in academic practice. The review team commends the continuous improvement of Navitas's work on assessment and finds the explicitness, clarity and transparency of Navitas UK's Assessment Regulations, which meet the needs of a variety of audiences, to be **good practice**.

2.55 The review team found that students are provided with responsive, individualised feedback on coursework very promptly, and well within the 10 days required by the Assessment Regulations. The provision of individualised feedback in a timely manner was noted as an item of good practice by QAA in the Educational Oversight report in 2012 and is embedded in the 2013-15 Action Plan, as part of the continuous improvement agenda. Navitas UK policies include Guidance on Best Practice in Assessment and Feedback, designed to complement the Assessment Regulations, providing ideas to improve current practice so that assessment and feedback are a tool to enhance student learning, rather than a hurdle for students to overcome in order to progress in their studies. The guide includes particular consideration of the needs of international students.

2.56 Meetings with staff revealed awareness of the best practice guidance and a very thoughtful understanding of the role of assessment in learning, combined with a proactive approach to providing timely and useful feedback in ways that responded to students' needs. Student surveys revealed high levels of satisfaction with the feedback that they receive. This was also confirmed in meetings with students as well as by students involved with compiling the student submission. Navitas UK's framework for responsive, flexible and timely feedback on students' work, which contributes to effective student learning, is **good practice**.

2.57 Navitas UK exercises rigorous oversight of the academic progress of students through carefully monitoring Key Performance Indicators focussed on pass rates, progression rates and retention. This process is undertaken by Navitas UK SMT, the College Learning and Teaching Boards, as well as at programme and module level. Additionally, the QaSO has oversight of the process of monitoring and review.

2.58 The review team found that students had an adequate understanding of the existence of appropriate mechanisms for making reasonable adjustments and reporting mitigating circumstances. They were confident about how to access help if needed and saw the student services staff as key in signposting them to whatever help they required. Similarly, students and staff were aware of the existence of appropriate mechanisms for reporting mitigating circumstances.

2.59 The review team concludes that Navitas UK has in place comprehensive and thorough assessment regulations, policies and processes that can be aligned to work effectively with those of the partner universities, supporting all students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes as required by Expectation B6. The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.60 Navitas UK regulations and policies stipulate that partner universities have responsibility for assuring academic standards by way of operational mechanisms, including moderation and assessment boards. As part of this responsibility the partner universities provide external scrutiny and advice for the colleges. Additionally Navitas UK requires that an independent external examiner is appointed in all circumstances where the regulations of the partner university prescribe this. The college operations manuals detail the particular arrangements in each college. All such arrangements are agreed with the partner university to ensure they are independent and can fulfil their duties without conflicts of interest. Accordingly, where the regulations of the partner university do not require the appointment of an external examiner, external scrutiny is provided by the link tutor or a subject specialist within the University. In the case of the ILSC modules where there is no equivalent provision within the universities, externality is provided by a Navitas-appointed external moderator.

2.61 External examiner and link tutor reports form a key part of the data considered at annual monitoring and institutional/periodic review. Oversight and monitoring is provided by Navitas UK QaSO, the college Learning and Teaching Boards and the Academic Advisory Committee. Operational responsibility for the appointment and removal of external examiners lies with the college Learning and Teaching Boards. This enables colleges to use the services of an external who is independent from the university and the college, for specific purposes, even where this is not required by the partner university, as part of the quality assurance processes.

2.62 This policy framework would allow Expectation B7 to be met.

2.63 The review team tested the application of the policy and procedures by scrutinising relevant regulations and guidance, a range of link tutor and external examiner reports, college responses to link tutor and external examiner reports and the minutes of annual monitoring. The review team also discussed the use of external examiner reports with students and staff in the colleges and with Navitas UK.

2.64 Where partner universities appoint external examiners in accordance with their regulations, the university takes responsibility for ensuring the examiners' broader understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Navitas UK has also developed and implemented guidance on the role of external examiners which clarifies the responsibilities of the Colleges in relation to the appointment and induction of external examiners. The link tutor and external examiner reports seen by the team appear fit for purpose. All were appropriately completed and confirmed their understanding of their roles in maintaining standards and affording independent external perspectives.

2.65 Examination practice and policy is clearly set out, as is the schedule for marking and moderating assessments. The moderation process is very thorough and involves the partner university as the external for all work at Level 4 and above. The link tutors from the relevant department are involved in the moderation of marks exercise, which provides them with a clear remit in terms of independent quality assurance. There is evidence of very proactive engagement by link tutors when any concerns arise. From the responses to external examiner reports there is clear evidence of thoughtful engagement leading to improvements in processes such as moderation.

2.66 External examiners (where appointed) and link tutors are present at college module panels and progression boards. Their reports and minutes of boards confirm a robust approach to the maintenance of standards. The reports seen by the review team were predominantly very positive about the quality of provision and confirmed that standards meet the threshold requirements, that courses remain current and course learning outcomes are in line with the relevant qualification descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements.

2.67 External examiners' reports are placed on the college VLE so that all students can view the comments made. Students are then able to discuss any items with the College through the CET through a representative on the student council. However, the effectiveness of this approach may need further consideration as there was little awareness of the availability of external examiner reports by students met by the review team.

2.68 After evaluating the evidence the review team was confident that there was no lack of independent external challenge and that appropriate use is made of external examiners, notwithstanding the varying arrangements for the provision of external perspectives, in accordance with the requirements of the respective partner universities. However, where independent external examiners have been appointed, in addition to the link tutors, course teams have found this to be useful. Continued reflection on externality at FHEQ Levels 3 and 4 may thus be worthwhile. In the light of the evidence the review team concludes that the current policy and regulatory framework of Navitas UK enables proper use of external examiners and concludes that Expectation B7 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.69 Navitas UK has developed templates and guidance for the preparation, discussion and reporting of annual monitoring by colleges. Navitas UK also permits colleges to adopt the annual monitoring procedures of their partner universities while retaining college and provider oversight of the range of required data. The implementation of annual monitoring processes is devolved to colleges.

2.70 Local arrangements are detailed in CPR documents and processes laid out in the colleges' operations manuals. Navitas UK's framework for annual monitoring includes consideration of student performance both at the college and, using tracer data, after progression, and feedback from staff, students and external examiners. Annual monitoring reports are required to identify good practice and action plans to address weaknesses and opportunities, as well as to provide the basis to update course documentation. Responsibility for monitoring and review is located within the governance structures set out in the Navitas UK Quality Manual. College reports are considered by the local college Learning and Teaching Board and Academic Advisory Committee and forwarded to Navitas UK QaSO. Wider dissemination of good practice occurs via Navitas UK's LTC and Learning and Teaching Forum. College reports are sent to partner universities.

2.71 Periodic review of provision follows the requirements and practices of partner universities with respect to their collaborative provision review procedures and the periodic review of linked university provision. In the former case the review is tri-partite involving Navitas UK, the college and the partner university. Such reviews are linked to contract revision and renewal and normally occur on a five or six-year cycle.

2.72 Navitas UK has a system of quarterly executive reporting by colleges on key performance indicators and operational effectiveness. Navitas UK publishes an annual report which draws, among other material, on this data.

2.73 Clauses are written into all RAAs which safeguard the academic interests of any students affected by programme closures that result from review activities.

2.74 Navitas UK has mapped its practice against Chapter B8 of the Quality Code and concluded that it has appropriate systems, policies, processes and procedures in place. The review team found that Navitas UK's framework for monitoring and review is designed appropriately in order to meet the Expectation.

2.75 In order to assess the effectiveness of these processes the review team looked at policy documents, committee minutes, monitoring and review reports; and sample RAAs. The review team also met those responsible for the oversight of monitoring and review.

2.76 The college annual monitoring reports seen by the review team confirm that Navitas UK's policies are implemented effectively and consistently across the college network. A link was also evident between annual monitoring and development of rolling action plans designed to address issues and promote enhancement. Further detail of the operation of annual monitoring processes are to be found in the college Higher Education Review reports. These Higher Education Review reports also highlight a number of instances of

good practice, in particular relating to the effective use of statistical data such as tracer data. Evidence of good practice extracted by Navitas UK's QaSO for wider discussion at the LTC and Learning and Teaching Forum was also noted.

2.77 Previously, oversight of annual monitoring has relied on upward executive reporting by exception on any issues which have been identified; no issues have recently been recorded. From 2016 the QaSO will strengthen oversight of college annual monitoring by producing an annual report based on an analysis of the college reports, which will be discussed at LTC and SMT and feed into Navitas UK's Annual Learning and Teaching Report.

2.78 Examples of periodic reviews seen by the review team confirm the thoroughness of the processes involved. Such reviews involve independent external panellists and draw upon a wide range of data and stakeholder views. Further details of the operation of periodic review processes are to be found in the college Higher Education Review reports.

2.79 The review team concludes that Navitas UK supports an effective system of programme monitoring and review through its colleges, together with appropriate oversight. The Expectation in Chapter B8 is met and the associated 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**

2.80 Navitas UK has an equal opportunities policy which clearly indicates that students of the College have the right to lodge a grievance/complaint, with information to be found in Navitas Policy and Regulations and the Student Handbook. It is expected that, other than in exceptional circumstances, students will invoke the informal stage within one calendar month of any incident. The Student Handbook also includes a section on cheating, plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct. Complaints are handled by the College, with the Navitas QaSO available if the complaint cannot be handled locally.

2.81 The protocol for dealing with a complaint identifies informal and formal stages, with the final hearing of the formal stage chaired by the Executive General Manager of Navitas UK. A complaint received by the partner university is referred directly to the College Principal to be considered under the complaints procedure of the college, since the partner university complaints procedure cannot be invoked until the student is studying on the university part of the pathway.

2.82 Appeals provide students with an opportunity to query a recommendation or decision made by the college Learning and Teaching Board or module panel. Queries may be made relating to the results of an individual module, completion of a stage or part of a programme, progression to the next stage of a programme, and entitlement to an award.

2.83 Navitas UK's procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.84 The review team tested the procedures through examining the complaints and appeals policies and student handbooks, and talked to staff and students about the handling of complaints and appeals, to determine their understanding of the process.

2.85 The evidence demonstrates that students are aware of the policy and procedures and to which body the appeal, or complaint should be directed. They are informed of how to access the relevant forms for making an appeal which are available on the VLE and students met confirmed they could ask a member of staff for advice and for the appropriate form to complete. Students confirmed the information provided was clear and easy to understand. As members of the respective college Students' Union have access to advice and support through the Students' Union should they wish to make a complaint or appeal.

2.86 Colleges keep records of complaints and appeals, although most reported that there had been no formal complaints. The effectiveness of the educational service, including pass rates, progression, awards appeals and disciplinary processes, is collated in the annual report and reviewed at the AAC, demonstrating an effective reporting system.

2.87 Overall, the review team concludes that the College processes for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities is fair, accessible and timely and meets the Expectation. Students are aware of the procedure and information is readily accessible. A Register of Complaints is maintained by the colleges and reported, if necessary, in their annual reports. Therefore the Expectation is met with low risk.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.89 Of the nine relevant Expectations in this area, all are met with low risk. There are no recommendations or affirmations. There are seven features of good practice, one each in relation to Expectations B2, and B3, two in relation to B6 and three in relation to B4.

2.90 There is also evidence of the College's commitment to the continuous enhancement of student learning opportunities, together with a clear focus on managing student needs and a widespread engagement of students which is supported.

2.91 The review team therefore concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at Navitas UK is **commended**.

### **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 Navitas UK outlines what is expected of each college with regard to the publishing of information for prospective students. As with all policies and procedures, responsibilities are negotiated and aligned within the localisation process for each of the colleges and partner universities. The General Manager Sales and Marketing within Navitas UK assists in creating a coordinated approach to the vetting of marketing and published information.

3.2 Navitas UK has a global centralised marketing and design department that assists with the design of communications and brand management. This is evident in the similarity of many documents across each of the colleges, helping to create a cohesive brand identity.

3.3 Each college is responsible for the management of published information with each partner university having the final sign-off for their respective college.

3.4 The responsibility of awarding transcripts to students is carried out within each of the partner universities. This includes the Confirmation of Attainment that outlines the appropriate credit of each student's first year degree module within their respective college. If a student wishes to leave before progressing, the college provides the student with a signed Confirmation of Attainment. Partner universities also provide tracer data, giving the colleges information on the progress of their students once they have moved on to the university. As described in relation to Expectation B8, this information is used by the colleges to evaluate and improve curricula and student learning.

3.5 Each college has its own student information management system and VLE. Currently Navitas UK does not have direct input to these systems. However, there are plans to implement the currently piloted Navigate software which will enable a seamless approach to information integration and facilitate oversight.

3.6 Navitas UK has sufficient input and oversight within the management of information to allow this Expectation to be met.

3.7 The review team examined all appropriate documentation that describes Navitas UK's processes allowing for effective oversight in the production of information for internal and external stakeholders. In addition, the team discussed the effectiveness of these processes with relevant staff within Navitas UK and subsequently explored this within each of the colleges.

3.8 All students met by the review team said that they had been given appropriate information when first being recruited to the college by Navitas UK approved agents. In some cases, students commented that the course exceeded their expectation.

3.9 The review team found that the estimated date for the implementation of Navigate is September 2016. The system has been in development since 2012 and is currently being piloted within a college in Australia. A number of key stakeholders within Navitas UK are set to carry out a gap analysis of this data and see how this can carry over to the UK College

network. The review team saw that the main benefit of implementing Navigate would give cohesion to the many different systems that are being used within each college and may allow for easy cross-college communication and college-Navitas communication within the one system. Furthermore, the team found that having a globalised system could provide more information to use for the development of Navitas UK's education portfolio. When questioning college staff in relation to the development and implementation of Navigate, the review team found that staff were optimistic about the benefits that this system could bring. In most cases the team saw the benefit of having a highly centralised student management information system and VLE, although in one case the college already has an effective integrated system and the introduction of this system may appear to be primarily for the benefit of Navitas UK.

3.10 Overall, Navitas UK has sufficient oversight in the management of information and provides appropriate assistance to each college when needed. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of the information about learning

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

3.12 The review team found that information for all intended audiences is fit for purpose, accurate and trustworthy.

3.13 The Expectation is met, with a low degree of risk. There are no recommendations or affirmations.

3.14 The review team concludes, therefore, that the quality of information about student learning opportunities at Navitas UK **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 Enhancement of quality is one of the five strategic aims of Navitas UK's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The organisation claims that 'ongoing enhancements...[are] part of the day-to-day modus operandi' and that a 'continuous improvement and enhancement mind-set has been fully embedded across the network'.

4.2 The LTC is responsible for the implementation of Navitas UK level action plan and advises Navitas UK on the enhancement of the common curriculum framework. The Learning and Teaching Forum (LTF) facilitates the dissemination of good practice and identifies and proposes improvements. The Director of Student Experience and Academic Quality provides leadership for embedding quality assurance and enhancement.

4.3 Navitas UK has an Enhancement policy and an Enhancement strategy designed to promote enhancement activity across the college network. These policies establish the requirement for colleges to set up CETs reporting to College Learning and Teaching Boards (CLTB). Colleges are also required to develop Quality Improvement Plans. CETs give students a significant role in enhancement activity; their effectiveness and output is monitored centrally by the QaSO.

4.4 At college level the Principal/Director has primary responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement. In governance terms the CET sits between Student Forum (SF), which is open to all students, and the SMT to which the CET indirectly reports. Hence It feeds into the AAC which supports enhancement on behalf of the Joint Strategic Partner Management Board and the Operational Advisory Committee which supports enhancement through operational matters.

4.5 Colleges are also able to dovetail their enhancement activity with that of their partner universities.

4.6 The review team found that Navitas UK's framework for enhancement is appropriately designed to meet the Expectation.

4.7 In order to assess the effectiveness of Navitas UK's framework for enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, the review team looked at policy documents, committee minutes and papers, and material related to specific events. The review team met senior staff responsible for enhancement and attended demonstrations of the new student record system and the internal social media site.

4.8 The review team identified a strong commitment to continuous improvement at both provider and college level, which was confirmed in meetings with staff and students.

4.9 CETs have been established in all colleges and operate effectively. They are chaired by the college Principal/Director and include representatives of academic and administrative staff and student representatives. Students are aware of their ability to feed issues into the CET which have been raised at the SF. Standing agenda items ensure that CET minutes and matters are considered at senior college committees. CETs are monitored centrally to ensure that they are operating effectively. Initiatives and actions arising from CETs are recorded centrally in order to facilitate the sharing of good practice. Annual reports

on CET activity presented to the LTC demonstrate discussion and action on a broad range of issues related to the student experience. Further details of the work of CETs and their impact can be found in the college HER reports. The CETs, which ensure that students have a significant role in enhancement within each college, are **good practice**.

4.10 Navitas UK's structures and processes for quality assurance are designed to promote enhancement. The exchange of ideas, and the dissemination of good practice across the college network, is encouraged through the LTF and specific events such as Navitas UK's annual conference. Navitas UK's policies and processes for annual monitoring, which are detailed in relation to Expectation B8, and for monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, which are detailed in relation to Expectation B3, also contribute to the enhancement of learning opportunities through the identification and dissemination of good practice.

4.11 Colleges are involved in the effective gathering, analysis and discussion of qualitative and quantitative data which informs discussion and action at both college and Navitas UK level. This data informs multi-level, rolling action plans which are developed to reflect strategy and local needs, including addressing issues identified through quality assurance processes and the activity of CETs.

4.12 Navitas UK and its global parent organisation sponsor cross-college initiatives designed to enhance learning opportunities informed by the issues and opportunities identified at college level and progressed upwards through the governance structure and Navitas UK oversight activity. The review team heard about a range of enhancement initiatives taking place at global level, such as a centre of excellence on Admissions and Conversions which is located in the UK. Others include a new student records system designed to improve administration and oversight at college and provider level by integrating the current separate data systems and a global social media site for the exchange of ideas and good practice among academic and professional staff across the organisation.

4.13 The facilitation and exchange of good practice across Navitas UK colleges through conferences, the Centre of Excellence and other networking initiatives which enhance the student learning experience, is **good practice**.

4.14 Navitas UK takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities through strategic initiatives and a cross-college framework that gives staff and students the opportunity to engage in continuous improvement and to share good practice. The review team concludes that Navitas UK's approach is effective in ensuring that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.16 The Expectation is met with a low degree of risk. There are no recommendations or affirmations and two features of good practice have been identified for this area, relating to the CETs and Navitas UK's facilitation and exchange of good practice across the network of embedded colleges.

4.17 There is also evidence of the College's commitment to the continuous enhancement of student learning opportunities, together with a clear focus on managing student needs and a widespread engagement of students, which is supported.

4.18 Therefore the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacies

### Findings

5.1 The Navitas UK Virtual Learning Strategy is a key element of the Navitas student experience framework, demonstrating a commitment to enhancement of the students' learning experience through the use of virtual learning platforms. The Strategy is designed to support all members of the College community, both staff and students, to use the VLE as the medium for all resources.

5.2 The aims and priorities of the strategy are clearly identified. They include: ensuring students can access and interact with appropriate materials to support their studies; encouraging staff to take an active role in student learning; ensuring tools which support student learning are appropriate, reliable accessible and secure; and ensuring staff and students are provided with appropriate information and training.

5.3 Students describe how they are given instruction during induction on the use of the VLE by each college. The VLE contains all relevant information including programme specifications and intended learning outcomes and definitive module documents and is available for staff and students to access. Links are provided to the electronic version of the college Student Handbook. Students must access two VLEs, one for the college and one for the university, although students met by the review team had no difficulty switching from one to the other.

5.4 Navitas UK's Interactive Learning Skills and Communication (ILSC) module, introduced in 2006 across the UK network, is seen as a critical contributing factor in the achievement of high success rate and one of the key themes included is technology and practical competency. The content demonstrates limited cover of digital literacy but students appear conversant with the technology and the review team was made aware of innovative methods used by some academics, interacting with students through technology. Lectures are made available on the VLE, uploaded before or after the lecture, dependent upon academics preference. The CET at one College discussed making computer classes compulsory for all new students because of different levels of computer literacy among students and there was evidence of additional support being readily available to students who required it.

5.5 A variety of teaching methods is employed in order that international students experience as many aspects of learning and teaching pedagogy that are found in universities in the UK. This is based on the need to enhance practical knowledge and theoretical understanding while preparing students for interactive, independent and self-sufficient learning and the transition onto the University pathway. The colleges make use to varying degrees, of the electronic plagiarism detection software. Students confirm the skills learned on ILSC module such as correct referencing and the use of plagiarism-detection software to reinforce good academic writing skills and prepare them well for future studies on the university pathway. The review team was made aware of a student initiative at one college using mobile social networking technology to develop self-help learning groups.

5.6 Staff development starts from induction of new staff and the sharing of good practice events. Continuing professional development needs, which includes IT skills, are identified through peer observation and management observation. Examples of continuing professional development of academic staff include the Teacher Forum which provides an opportunity to discuss issues including the use of technology in the classroom, resources available and the sharing of good practice. A Technology Enhanced Learning session was recently included as part of a Navitas College network conference. The team was informed



that academic staff are encouraged to undertake a Postgraduate Certificate in Education where digital literacy is a key component of the curriculum.

5.7 The team concludes that there has been significant IT development over recent years and the introduction of the Virtual Learning Strategy demonstrates a commitment to further enhancement. Students on the whole confirm that they feel well prepared in the use of technology, while access to the VLE and the use of plagiarism-detection software is embedded in the ILSC module common across the College network. A variety of teaching methods is used, many of which include the use of digital technology, with some academics encouraging student interaction by IT. The establishment of IT champions in some colleges helps share good practice and expertise with others across the network. There is, however, still more work that could be done in this area to embed digital literacy in the curriculum.

## 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 24-27 of the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\) handbook](#)

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

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

### 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

### Embedded college

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education

### **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* (FHEQIS).

### **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.

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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

### **Programme specifications**

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

### **Public information**

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

### **Quality Code**

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

### **Reference points**

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

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

### **Threshold academic standard**

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

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

### **Widening participation**

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

## **QAA1698 - R4979 - Aug 16**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2016  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557 050

Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)