



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Nazarene Theological College

March 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at [Nazarene Theological College](#). The review took place from 14 to 16 March 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Julie Andreshak-Behrman
- Dr Mike Wing
- Dr Barbara Tarling (student reviewer).

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

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

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

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with 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.

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

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

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

⁴ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Nazarene Theological College

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

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Nazarene Theological College:

- the comprehensive range of staff development opportunities available to all staff, which makes a significant contribution to the quality of the overall student experience (Expectation B3)
- the highly supportive learning and pastoral support environment which recognises and meets the individual needs of students effectively (Expectation B4)
- the rich and active research environment which ensures that students receive the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees (Expectation B11).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to Nazarene Theological College.

By October 2016:

- make more evaluative use of progression and achievement statistics in the annual monitoring of course units (Expectation B8).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action that Nazarene Theological College is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the steps being taken to improve communication among all parties involved in the provision of placement learning (Expectation B10).

Theme: Student Employability

Employability is at the core of what the College does. Its mission and vision put heavy emphasis on the need for an education appropriate to the needs of the ministry and its work. The College states that it aims to 'shape and equip people for innovative Christian ministry for the twenty-first century' and that it has the 'practical relevance' to prepare learners for vocational work within religious studies, youth work and ministry. Employability has been purposeful in the design and monitoring of degrees and engagement with employers.

Students have access to a careers adviser who delivers employment seminars and holds one-to-one meetings with students. Personal Development Plans are used in meetings with personal tutors, to guide students in their studies but also to help the transition into careers following graduation. The College has taken forward the Annual Monitoring Report 2015 comment on student destination data and collected this data for the first time in 2015. In reflecting on this data, the College has made an enhancement to the careers provision and offered a careers fair over two days on campus as an opportunity for students to explore further their options after completion of their award.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

Nazarene Theological College 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 \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

About Nazarene Theological College

Nazarene Theological College was founded in 1944. In 1959, the College and its 25 students moved to Manchester, to the current campus in Didsbury.

The College's mission statement affirms that, 'We are a Christian college in the evangelical Wesleyan Holiness tradition committed to the mission of God through providing theological education that is academically robust and practically relevant.' The five core strategic objectives are as follows: to be academically excellent and research led; to foster community that is intentionally Christ-like; to enhance its missional partnerships with integrity; to strengthen its resource base to ensure a sustainable future; and to enhance its reputation for excellence.

The College's commitment to scholarship has driven it to identify and meet external standards of quality throughout its history. In 1973, the College became accredited to award the Bachelor of Theology (ThB) degree through partnership with a North American institution (now known as Ambrose University). When a route to British accreditation became feasible in the 1980s, the College applied for and obtained validation by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). The College became a validated partner college of the University of Manchester in 1992, shortly before the dissolution of the CNAA.

The College's programmes are designed to provide opportunities for holistic development of students, ensuring their intellectual development is supported by practical skills and personal maturity.

The College offers the following provision:

- BA (Hons) in Theology
- BA (Hons) in Theology: Youth Work and Ministry
- BA (Hons) in Practical Theology
- MA in Theology
- PhD and MPhil programmes.

The headcount enrolment in October 2015 was 192 students. This includes 27 students who are occasional students or on non-validated provision. The total number of students on award-bearing courses was 163. Postgraduate research students accounted for 29 per cent (48) of those on award-bearing courses. There were 71 full-time students and 92 part-time.

Non-European Union students accounted for 30 per cent of the student population. There were nine full-time and seven part-time academic staff.

Since the last full QAA review, a Review for Educational Oversight in March 2012, the College has seen the appointment of a new Principal. Other changes since the last review include the development of three new pathways in the MA in Theology; the introduction of the PhD (Missiology), to complement the traditional research-based PhD; and the establishment of the Manchester Centre for the Study of Christianity and Islam (MCSCI). The implications of these curricular changes for students' learning opportunities has been to extend the range of opportunities, in line with student demand, and (in the case of the MCSCI) to provide a resource that will help students (and the College's wider constituency) to engage critically and reflectively with the changing nature of the British and global religious landscape.

The pivotal challenges faced by the College are both internal and external. Internally, there is the continued challenge of succession planning, as key members of faculty come towards retirement, and the College seeks to maintain and enhance its quality of provision. The College is fee-dependent, and so maintaining and gradually increasing student numbers remains a priority. The most difficult challenges identified by the College are those posed by external regulation: the challenge to maintain an international profile in the face of UK regulation that does not allow postgraduate students to bring their families to this country while they study; the challenge of Student Number Controls which may limit the possibility of growth; and the increasing cost of regulation to the small college, while fee levels remain frozen.

The College has a partnership with one awarding body, the University of Manchester. This has operated since 1992, with the most recent revalidation taking place in 2011. The next Periodic and Institutional Review is due in October 2016. The College's relationship with the awarding University is a close one, perhaps underpinned by a close geographic location. This means that the formal structures of validation are reinforced by numerous academic links between the institutions; shared research events and seminars and shared research projects are the most obvious of these, but contact with the collaborative adviser and administrator is also regular and instinctive, and this constructive relationship is valued by both institutions.

As well as the Review for Educational Oversight in March 2012, the College has had three annual monitoring visits, in 2013, 2014 and 2015. The 2015 visit found that the College was making acceptable progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision. The College continues to build on the good practice identified in the 2012 report and has addressed the two recommendations, the first of which was to consider the arrangements for returning annotated scripts to students at Levels 5 and 6. Students now report receiving timely and extensive feedback on their assessed work. The second, to develop a strategy to build closer links with the Higher Education Academy (HEA), is demonstrated by the fact that staff are required to seek membership of the HEA and through increased engagement with the academy.

Explanation of the findings about Nazarene Theological College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: 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* are met by:

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College is not itself a degree-awarding body and therefore the awards arising from its programmes are validated externally. The University of Manchester (the University) is the awarding body.

1.2 The College develops its own programmes in consultation with the University. The programmes are submitted to the Academic Panel of the University of Manchester as well as to the Faculty of Arts, Languages and Cultures.

1.3 Some of the awards are also professionally validated. The BA (Hons) in Theology: Youth Work and Ministry is validated by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB), the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for youth and community workers, and the BA (Hons) in Practical Theology is an approved ordination pathway for the Regional Course of Study Advisory Committee (RCOSAC) in the Church of the Nazarene.

1.4 The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The team tested this Expectation in meetings with the senior leadership team and faculty and by examining documented evidence such as completed course unit descriptors.

1.6 It is the role of the University to ensure that the College's awards are appropriately situated within *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The guidelines for doing so are clearly articulated by the University, as is the division of responsibilities between the College and the University. However, the College is also aware of the parameters of the FHEQ and is able to speak about how its awards demonstrate the level of expectations through established learning outcomes.

1.7 Detailed programme specifications show how the qualifications align with the FHEQ, and list the intended learning outcomes and credit framework. They are available to students in their course handbooks.

1.8 The College is equally aware of Subject Benchmark Statements, and the University requires that these are referenced in the programme specifications.

1.9 The awarding body and College work cooperatively to ensure adherence to the standards set at the national level, therefore the Expectation is met and the 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

1.10 The Board of Governors has the overall responsibility for institutional oversight, including budgeting and strategy.

1.11 The College adopts the degree regulations of the University. The Academic Board is responsible for the day-to-day management of academic quality along with undergraduate and postgraduate working groups. Its membership comprises all faculty teaching staff, elected student representatives and appointed external advisers, including the University's Collaborative Academic Adviser.

1.12 Programme-specific responsibilities are delegated to the faculty and its substructures, the undergraduate and postgraduate working groups.

1.13 Examination Boards govern the award of academic credit and qualifications in accordance with the relevant academic frameworks and regulations, and the requirements of the awarding body.

1.14 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.15 The design of the committee structure that oversees the academic quality infrastructure is sound and functions effectively.

1.16 The review team reviewed meeting minutes for the Academic Board, Undergraduate Working Group, Postgraduate Working Group and Research Degrees Committee. They also discussed the approach to academic standards with the senior leadership team and teaching staff.

1.17 The awarding body and College work cooperatively to ensure academic standards are maintained, and govern how they award academic credit and qualifications. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the 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

1.18 The College works closely with the University to ensure that there are definitive records for all its programmes and that these records are maintained and updated as necessary.

1.19 Detailed programme specifications are prepared by the College and submitted to the University for approval, as are any subsequent revisions. The specifications are mapped against FHEQ standards, Subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements; they include information about the programme's aims, content, intended learning outcomes and assessment scheme.

1.20 Each course unit has an approved syllabus, which is a formal record of its content, structure, constituent parts, assessment scheme and intended learning outcomes as approved by the University's Academic Panel. This information is published on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.21 Programme specifications are initiated, designed and scrutinised by the undergraduate or postgraduate working groups and then referred to faculty for approval. Once faculty has approved the specifications, they are reviewed by the College's Academic Board and submitted to the University's Academic Panel for final approval.

1.22 All documentation is registered annually with the University Collaborative Partner Administrative Officer. Any changes to programme specifications are introduced for new entrants; existing cohorts continue with their previously agreed course of study.

1.23 Student academic transcripts are retained in both hard copy and electronic versions in accordance with the College's document retention policy.

1.24 These mechanisms would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team tested the operation of the College's procedures by examining a range of documentary evidence including programme specifications, syllabi, course unit descriptors and programme handbooks, and by verifying their presence on the VLE. The team also met senior and teaching staff as well as full and part-time students.

1.26 Students reported that they have full access to all information about their programmes and course units and that they understand the intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

1.27 The University's last Periodic and Institutional Review of Programmes confirmed that the validation process works effectively and that both the University and the College were satisfied with the nature and delivery of the collaborative provision. The College's continued adherence to the University's regulatory requirements and quality assurance processes is clearly demonstrated in the Annual Monitoring Reports and Action Plans.

1.28 The review team found that the procedures operate effectively and that programme specifications and course unit descriptors act as key reference points for the College's provision. The review team concludes that 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

1.29 The University has overall responsibility for approval of programmes delivered by the College, and for assuring that appropriate standards are achieved. The design and development of the programme curriculum is principally driven by the College.

1.30 Programme approval follows the frameworks and regulations of the University. These detail the quality assurance procedures that must be followed by the College to ensure that UK threshold standards are maintained. The first stage is approval in principle for the development of the programme. The second stage is concerned with the development and approval of the detailed structure and content of the programme. The University has established that as part of this latter stage, each award will be defined in terms of the number of credits required to obtain an award, and the level of these credits.

1.31 The detailed design and development of programmes is undertaken by the College's undergraduate and postgraduate working groups, which include external representation where appropriate to provide an external view of standards at the design stage. The College also works closely with the University Academic Advisers whose role is to ensure that programmes are at an appropriate level and generally meet the University's requirements. Programme and module curricula are defined in programme specifications, programme handbooks and course unit syllabi.

1.32 Any changes to programmes are generally initiated by the College and submitted for approval to the University.

1.33 These structures and frameworks would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.34 The team reviewed documentation related to programme approval, and met with a range of academic and academic support-related staff and senior managers.

1.35 From a review of the relevant documentation, including that relating to a new programme pathway and a reviewed programme pathway, and from discussions with academic staff, the team formed the view that the College follows the relevant regulations of the University. It is fulfilling its responsibilities for programme approval effectively within the context of the agreements with the University, and the programmes delivered by the College are appropriately aligned to the FHEQ and mapped against the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.36 Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation 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

1.37 The responsibility for ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes rests with the University as awarding body. The College has responsibility for the design of assessments, which it undertakes in accordance with the University's assessment framework. This framework requires the College to ensure that assessment is aligned with the intended learning outcomes. The marking and moderation of assessment is undertaken by the College. All awards have published programme specifications and these show clear programme aims, learning outcomes, and learning, teaching and assessment strategies. The University's Academic Panel approves the framework of modular assessment as part of the more general programme approval process.

1.38 Draft questions and the rubric for final examinations are reviewed by external examiners to ensure that the examinations are appropriate for assessing threshold standards at the level of the awards, and revisions are made in the light of external examiner comments.

1.39 The University Collaborative Academic Adviser and the Collaborative Partnership Administrative Officer are present at each examination board, ensuring that the College's examination boards follow the procedures of and meet the academic standards required by the University. An annual report from the Collaborative Academic Adviser provides the opportunity to raise any concerns about assessment processes. These reports are considered at the appropriate College committees; a response is then made and an action plan instituted.

1.40 These procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.41 The team reviewed a wide range of assessment-related documentation including that related to programme approval and modification, minutes of examination boards, assessment briefs, external examiners' reports, programme specifications, collaborative academic adviser reports and assessment-related policies. The team also discussed assessment arrangements with staff and students of the College.

1.42 Staff and students demonstrated awareness of the University's assessment arrangements and clearly understand the underlying method and rationale of assessment. The team reviewed assessment-related information and found the information in programme specifications and course unit syllabi to be consistent and accurate, with clear curriculum maps and assessment protocols. Assessment regulations are similarly clear and understood by staff and students. External examiners also commented favourably on the effectiveness of assessment in appropriately measuring the achievement of students and the alignment of assessment to learning outcomes.

1.43 Overall, the team concludes that credit and qualifications are awarded where achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. The Expectation is therefore met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.44 The responsibility for the monitoring and review of programmes lies ultimately with the University, and the College engages with the policies and procedures of the University for monitoring and review. The University's annual monitoring process is specifically intended to ensure that the standard of programmes is being maintained and considers programmes in relation to standards. The College's programmes are also subject to the University's periodic review process, which measures the continuing validity and relevance of programme aims and intended learning outcomes. The panel for a Periodic Review also includes input from external subject specialists.

1.45 These mechanisms would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.46 The team reviewed the documentation related to annual monitoring and periodic review, and met a range of academic and academic support-related staff and senior managers.

1.47 The team considered that both annual monitoring and periodic review reports appropriately reflected on external examiners' reports and other relevant standards data, such as programme progression and achievement statistics, to ensure that appropriate programme standards are achieved.

1.48 The College's undergraduate and postgraduate working groups discuss annual and periodic review reports, as does Academic Board, to allow a common understanding of any standards issues that may have been identified through the annual monitoring and periodic review processes. Staff show a clear understanding of the standards expected of students on the College's programmes.

1.49 Overall, the College follows appropriate processes for the monitoring and review of taught programmes, which it consistently applies to ensure that academic standards are set at the level to meet UK threshold standards. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.50 The College has an obligation to use external expertise in accordance with the requirements set out in the Collaborative Agreement with the University.

1.51 The University appoints external examiners who regularly review student work and report accordingly. The College has a clear system in which it evaluates, records and acts upon the assessment of the external examiners.

1.52 External examiners assure academic standards by identifying examples of good practice and highlighting any areas in need of review.

1.53 The College is also subject to quinquennial review by the awarding body, and the annual monitoring exercises enable areas of concern to be identified and remedied.

1.54 This approach would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.55 The team assessed this Expectation by reviewing the Collaborative Agreement with the University, and by reading external examiner reports, minutes of examination boards and reports of periodic review and annual monitoring. The team discussed the operation of the approach taken in meetings with the College senior team and academic staff.

1.56 Designated members of College staff work closely with a Collaborative Academic Adviser from the University to ensure standards are maintained. The Collaborative Academic Adviser is a member of the Academic Board. They liaise with the Dean, attend meetings of the Research Degrees Committee and meet with representative students twice a year. Their annual report identifies instances of good practice and areas in need of review. Reports and responses feed into the agenda of the University Academic Panel.

1.57 The College has external members on the Academic Board, Administrative Council and the Youth Work and Ministry Course Board.

1.58 The awarding body and College work cooperatively to ensure that the provision is transparent and publicly accountable. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the 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

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

1.60 Overall, the College is effective in managing its responsibilities in conjunction with its degree-awarding body, and is effective in maintaining academic standards.

1.61 The team's scrutiny of a wide range of evidence, and meetings with staff and students, led it to conclude that effective use is made of relevant subject and qualification benchmarks, and external expertise, in the development of programmes and their subsequent approval and monitoring. Effective use is also made of input from the Collaborative Academic Adviser from the degree-awarding body.

1.62 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 Programme approval follows the relevant frameworks and regulations of the University. The first stage of the University's approval process is for the College to gain approval in principle for the development of new programmes. This stage approves the business case for a programme proposal and its strategic fit. The second stage entails the development and approval of the detailed structure and content of the programme. The approval stage also includes input from external advisers.

2.2 Within the College, initial proposals for new or modified programmes are generally introduced by subject groups. The detailed design and development of the programmes are undertaken by the undergraduate and postgraduate working groups, which always include student representation, and may also include external representation (such as PSRB representation) where appropriate. The College's Academic Board oversees the development to University-stage approval of all higher education programmes offered by the College. In addition, new programmes are endorsed by the College's Board of Governors. Staff at the College work closely with the University Academic Advisers to ensure that programmes are at an appropriate level and meet the University's requirements.

2.3 Any changes to the programmes are generally initiated by the College and submitted for approval to the University.

2.4 The design of these policies and processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.5 The team reviewed the minutes of relevant committees including the Academic Board, the undergraduate and postgraduate working groups, and subject meetings, and examined documentation related to programme approval. The team also met a range of academic staff, academic support-related staff and senior managers.

2.6 The College follows the University's policies and procedures as they relate to programme approval. It is also clear that there is extensive internal discussion of the development of new programmes by College faculty and that the College exercises oversight of the development of new provision. The team found that the College has effective consultative relationships with other partners of the University, where these have similar programme portfolios, and that this relationship allows the sharing of curriculum development expertise to the benefit of both institutions.

2.7 The College operates effective processes for programme design and approval and these are underpinned by clear guidance and support. Therefore, the team concludes that the University meets the Expectation in both design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.8 The College is responsible for the design and implementation of admissions policies and procedures for all undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses. Research degree students are selected by the College and recommended for admission to the University, which makes the admission decisions and issues admission letters.

2.9 There is a clear process for student admissions, which is outlined in the College's Prospectus and articulated in more detail in the Admissions Policy and Entrance Requirements Document. The document is available on the College website and includes information on how to lodge an appeal or complaint.

2.10 Full-time undergraduate applications are processed through UCAS and a link to the UCAS site is provided on the College website. Late applications and applications for part-time study are made via the online forms on the College website. Prospective students are encouraged to attend Open Days and applicants for full and part-time undergraduate study are required to attend an interview, either on site or via a videoconference link.

2.11 The College has a strategic commitment to recruiting for a diverse student body, and seeks to operate a transparent and professional service providing clear and accurate information to prospective students and enquirers. It sets targets for admission decisions, ensures that staff are properly trained and keeps its admission policies and procedures under regular review. The policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.12 The team explored the College's approach to recruitment, selection and admissions by viewing a wide range of documentation and through discussions with students and staff.

2.13 The evidence shows that the College's admissions policy reflects its strategic commitment to diversity through an explicit recognition of the importance of non-standard entry routes. Following a suggestion from the University Academic Panel, the University's partner group of validated theological colleges has agreed a shared admission framework for prospective students with non-standard entry qualifications, which ensures that applicants are assessed against pre-defined criteria. The College's Admissions Policy and Entrance Requirements Document is currently being updated to reflect this change.

2.14 The majority of students who took part in the College's Student Survey were positive about the College's admission procedures and spoke favourably about their experience of the process. There is a well-organised induction and orientation programme for new entrants that students found particularly helpful and effective.

2.15 The team considers that the College's recruitment, selection and admission processes are reliable, transparent and inclusive and that they are administered efficiently. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.16 The College has produced a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy which guides its academic delivery. The Faculty Handbook further considers the approach to learning and teaching at the institution.

2.17 The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy appears as an appendix in the Faculty Handbook and is available to students on the College's VLE. The handbook is reviewed annually and is published on the VLE together with other key documents, including external examiner reports, course syllabi and assessment information.

2.18 The approach set out in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Faculty Handbook would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.19 The team assessed the policy and accompanying procedures by reviewing documentation such as the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and audit trails provided by the College. The team also participated in a demonstration of the College's VLE and met staff, faculty and students.

2.20 The College is responsible for hiring staff and the University approves all staff teaching or supervising on courses leading to University awards. Seventy per cent of permanent teaching staff at the College hold PhDs. The other 30 per cent are currently undertaking PhD studies and being supported by the College in doing so.

2.21 There is well-developed induction and mentoring support for new staff. Staff appraisal processes encourage staff to reflect on their teaching practice and the newly introduced system of Peer-to-Peer Interaction and Review is further enhancing the formative support as part of professional development.

2.22 A major challenge identified by the College is that of succession planning. The College is addressing this challenge with alacrity and has dedicated resources to provide a full six-month overlap between incoming and outgoing academic staff, with the expectation of close mentorship to ensure continuity of the student experience.

2.23 The Faculty Handbook is comprehensive in covering all expectations of faculty in all areas, as well as outlining the professional development ethos and opportunities at the College.

2.24 Sabbatical leave is one such opportunity. Faculty are eligible for sabbatical leave to pursue research and other scholarly activities after four years at the College. The College has recently strengthened leave benefits further by deciding to pay a 100 per cent faculty salary during this period.

2.25 Professional development, both individual and coordinated events, is an important feature of the support and development system for staff. The College financially supports those undertaking doctoral studies. The timetable respects a reading and research day each

week. As a matter of course, there are no teaching commitments or meetings held on the research day.

2.26 Academic Staff Developments include regular opportunities for faculty to share their research, to learn more about student support needs, such as dyslexia, and to engage with the Quality Code. These opportunities have been well received by faculty and staff.

2.27 Dissemination of good practice from teaching and learning takes place via peer observations, away days (two per year) and team-teaching across disciplines. Dissemination is taken further beyond the immediate College through a collaboration with Cliff College, another college that has validated programmes from the University. Staff exchanges and review of new units and policies take place between the two colleges. In total, the comprehensive range of staff development opportunities available to all staff, which makes a significant contribution to the quality of the overall student experience, is **good practice**.

2.28 Student feedback is extensively reviewed at Course Unit Evaluation meetings before being reported to the faculty, where it is used to drive the further enhancement of learning opportunities and teaching practices. The VLE is a central vehicle for disseminating information to students, such as syllabi, readings and other resources. The sense of community and connections made on campus are integral to social cohesion and the ethos of the institution. Students feel highly supported inside the classroom and out. Opportunities to enable students to find out how their feedback has been received and acted upon have been considered and this is now being disseminated more consistently.

2.29 Students take responsibility for their own learning as they have a choice in module selection and in dissertation and assessment topics. They are also involved with the selection of their work placements. The importance of scholarly activity is not limited to staff; research student engagement with scholarly activity is also shown by the long list of student publications.

2.30 The College has effective arrangements and practices for supporting staff and faculty to provide sound learning opportunities. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.31 As part of its strategic mission, the College aims to create an intentional, interactive community among all members of the College in the belief that this is the environment in which students will be afforded the best opportunities to develop and succeed.

2.32 There is a comprehensive network of support and resources for students' academic, personal and spiritual needs. The arrangements for this support are shared with students via The Essential Guide: Information for Students and the website. There are student representatives at every level of the College's academic governance structure, from the undergraduate working groups to the board of governors.

2.33 A substantial resource collection is available on campus and students have further access to materials on the VLE and at the University. Access to the University resources is dependent upon the level of the course. A committee chaired by the College Librarian is responsible for the strategic planning of the resources. There is student representation on this committee.

2.34 A Learning Support Coordinator serves as an advocate for students with disabilities and also delivers a study skills class to all first-year undergraduates. This is in addition to more informal, peer-led support such as a mature students support group and a weekly IT training session.

2.35 Regular meetings with personal tutors, Pastoral Care Groups and research supervisors are the structures that support students on an ongoing basis. Students are welcomed to campus with a comprehensive orientation programme.

2.36 The arrangements described would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.37 The team met students, faculty and staff, and reviewed the website and other documentary evidence, such as the results of student surveys, to evaluate the effectiveness of this provision.

2.38 Both research and taught students emphasised that they were attracted to the College because of its small community nature. Their subsequent experience has confirmed their expectations in this respect. Whether part-time or full-time, on site or overseas, students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the supportive approach to learning needs and to professional and personal development.

2.39 Students are generally satisfied with the on-site College library facility and the access to University library facilities. However, while recognising that resources have to be prioritised, there was some demand from research students for more resources dedicated to materials specific to their particular areas of research. Students who are not resident in the local area establish links with institutions in their home area or country to access additional resources. The interview process for admissions can include discussion of such access. This is in addition to the virtual access afforded students for online books and journals.

2.40 The College has focused its energies on establishing processes that demonstrate awareness of the needs of non-traditional and minority students. The College carried out a review of retention and progression data and has identified lower rates of academic success

among black minority ethnic (BME) students. The acknowledgement that this group might have particular needs, and that those needs might be met with focused support, led to the establishment of a BME student group. This is a new addition to the support structures at the College. While anecdotal evidence suggests that it is going well, data is not yet available to determine its overall effectiveness.

2.41 Students with disabilities, both physical and learning, are well accommodated. Identified at the application stage and supported throughout their experience, there was ample evidence that students are benefiting from the work of the Learning Support Coordinator and others to assist students in gaining proper diagnoses and government funding. The College also provides access to a counsellor and a chaplain as needed.

2.42 Every day, students, faculty and staff gather mid-morning for a shared coffee break. This informal session offers an opportunity for members of the College to engage informally, get questions answered and seek support. This is in addition to a general open-door policy, which students remarked is an effective way to communicate with faculty and staff.

2.43 The highly supportive learning and pastoral environment which recognises and meets the individual needs of students is **good practice**.

2.44 The team found that the arrangements and resources which enable students to develop are very well established and effective. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.45 Student engagement at the College operates on both formal and informal levels.

2.46 On a formal level, students have a voice in a wide range of management and governance committees. The Student President is a member of the Board of Governors and elected student representatives serve on the Academic Board, the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Working Groups, the Administrative Council, the Library Committee, the Chaplaincy Committee and the Mitigating Circumstances Committee. Although there is no dedicated place for a research student representative in the government of the College, the postgraduate representative may be a research student, as is presently the case.

2.47 Student representatives also serve on the Youth Course Board, which is a key focus for course revision and development. Students provide feedback on their studies through Course Unit Evaluations, and the College uses their responses to assess strengths and weaknesses in course content and delivery and to make changes accordingly. Students also have ready access to external examiner reports, which are published on the VLE. These arrangements enable the student voice to be heard in the key policy-setting boards of the College.

2.48 Student representatives are elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Student Council and are supported by a Faculty Adviser. The College has recently introduced an orientation and induction process for student members of committees, and the Principal meets weekly with the Student Body President to support and mentor their development.

2.49 The key method of communication between the College and its students is the weekly bulletin, which is emailed to all students. Official academic announcements, including the results of unit evaluations and College assessments, are also posted on the Dean's notice board and on the VLE.

2.50 On an informal level, the daily coffee break is actively promoted as an occasion for relaxed exchanges of views between students and staff. The weekly meetings with pastoral care groups and the faculty's open-door policy provide additional opportunities for informal engagement.

2.51 These measures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.52 To assess the efficacy of the steps that the College takes to engage students both individually and collectively, the team examined a wide range of evidence, including policy documents, reports, committee minutes and student surveys, and met faculty members, full and part-time undergraduate students, taught postgraduate and postgraduate research students, and student representatives.

2.53 The evidence shows that both formal and informal engagement are working effectively. Student members of the undergraduate and postgraduate working groups are involved in the discussion and analysis of programme evaluations and in all annual and periodic reviews. They are also able to contribute to, and monitor, the College's action plans. These processes allow the student body to be fully engaged in the College's quality assurance processes.

2.54 Students expressed a strong sense of partnership in the assurance and enhancement of their learning. They particularly appreciate the collegial environment and the wide range of communication channels that are open to them.

2.55 Staff and students are working together to ensure that the Student Council functions as effectively as possible. A recent constitutional change has opened the post of Student President to a wider range of candidates and there are plans to develop a Student Council area on the VLE to improve communication between student representatives and the wider student body. The College also intends to establish a formal evaluation process to gather systematic feedback from student representatives and to assess the robustness of its system of student representation.

2.56 Overall, the team finds that a wide range of formal and informal measures allow the student voice to be heard at all levels of the College's organisational structure, and both staff and students expressed a genuine and enthusiastic sense of partnership. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.57 The University has overall responsibility for the standards of assessment and award of credit, and has defined a set of relevant policies, regulations and processes. As part of these regulations the University delegates responsibility for the setting, marking and moderation of assessment to the College, with the expectation that the College nonetheless operates within a wider University assessment and accreditation of prior learning regulatory framework.

2.58 These academic regulations form part of the Undergraduate Handbook, the Postgraduate (Taught) Handbook, and the Research Degree Regulations, which are submitted annually to the University for review and approval before being issued to students.

2.59 Initial proposals for new or modified assessment arrangements are generally introduced by subject groups, discussed and proposed by the undergraduate and postgraduate working groups and approved by the College's faculty and academic board before being submitted to the University for approval. The overall design of unit assessment, and the way in which it fits into the overall assessment framework at programme level, are approved by the University's Academic Panel as part of the University's processes for approving new programmes.

2.60 All new or revised assessment design at both programme and course unit level must be approved by the University's Academic Panel before being introduced.

2.61 Academic staff set individual course unit assessments. Within the College, all assessment tasks are reviewed as part of the assessment scrutiny process, which acts as a forum for the review of assessment, and also plans submission deadlines to avoid overburdening students at particular times of the year. All examinations are additionally approved by the external examiner before the examination is set. Other assessment tasks are subject to review by the external examiner at the relevant examination board.

2.62 Coursework is usually submitted electronically, except where this is not appropriate. Student work is marked and moderated by College staff, and student work is scrutinised by the external examiners at examination boards. There is an expectation that work is returned to students within a three-week period, and the College's Academic Office monitors the adherence to this requirement.

2.63 Examination boards follow the relevant University regulations, and are attended by the University's Collaborative Academic Adviser and Collaborative Partnership Administrative Officer, who, in this context, provide clarification and advice with respect to assessment.

2.64 The College has a formal process to address the issue of extenuating circumstances. Students submit extenuating circumstances to a Mitigating Circumstances Panel, which includes student representation, and considers mitigating circumstances in the context of a clear mitigating circumstances policy. The College makes provision for students

with a disability, including dyslexia and dyspraxia, following the University policy in these matters with respect to the reasonable adjustments that should be made.

2.65 The College's approach to academic misconduct is explained to students as part of their induction programme as well as in the student study skills module, and is also detailed in the relevant academic handbook. The College's academic misconduct policy emulates that of the University, with suitable adaptation to the context of a smaller institution. As most student work is submitted electronically, use is made of plagiarism-detection software. There is no overall College report on academic misconduct; however, the incidence of such cases in the College is relatively low.

2.66 The College applies the University process and regulations for the accreditation of prior learning and the process is managed by the College Registrar and Dean. The College reports annually to the University on College accreditation of prior learning activity.

2.67 Overall, the framework for assessment followed by the College sets out a consistent and coherent basis for the approval, grading and moderation of assessment, award of credit, progression and award classification, with due regard given for mitigating circumstances and allowance made for students with disabilities. The relevant regulations are readily available to staff and students. Together this would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.68 The team reviewed a wide range of assessment-related documentation including that related to programme approval and modification, minutes of assessment boards, assessment briefs, external examiners' reports, programme handbooks, and University and College assessment-related policies. The team also met staff and students.

2.69 Expectations of assessment and moderation are detailed for staff in the Faculty Handbook. To help ensure equitable expectations across the levels, guidance for setting assessment is provided to staff in course unit specification guidance provided by the University. The University has provided achievement criteria at undergraduate level, and is introducing criteria at postgraduate level to help staff set assessment at the appropriate level. The College has provided assessment rubrics for a variety of assessment types, and use is made by staff of qualification descriptors, which are aligned with the FHEQ. The process of internal and external moderation is explained to students as part of their orientation programme and is detailed in the Academic Handbooks.

2.70 Staff development on assessment is provided in regular workshops, and the College has a mentoring process in place with experienced staff mentoring new staff. In addition, the College works closely with the University Academic Advisers, with the Adviser playing a key role in ensuring that programme assessment is at an appropriate level and generally meets the University's requirements.

2.71 Based on a scrutiny of the relevant paperwork, the team confirmed that the College follows the University-prescribed processes for approving new assessment, designing assessment, accreditation of prior learning (APL), mitigating circumstances, students with disabilities and quality assuring the assessment processes.

2.72 Students confirmed the clarity of assessment tasks and expressed the view that the College provides sufficient information on assessment for students to monitor their own academic achievement. They also praised the timeliness and quality of the feedback provided. Similarly, external examiners have commented favourably on the effectiveness and efficiency of assessment procedures. Staff confirmed arrangements for assessment and the support that they receive to allow for effective assessment.

2.73 The amount of APL activity at the College is low but rigorously applied, and is based on a scrutiny of the relevant paperwork. The team formed the view that the APL process at the College is sound.

2.74 The team concludes that, overall, the College follows a valid and reliable assessment process which allows students to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.75 The University is responsible for the appointment of external examiners. The College often proposes examiners for approval. The College has five external examiners for its taught provision. Three are subject examiners for undergraduate awards, one is a fieldwork examiner (for PSRB purposes) and one is responsible for the MA programme. They attend all examination boards and their views are recorded in the minutes.

2.76 The external examiner initially indicates matters that will appear in the report during the Exam Board, when each examiner offers a summary of engagement during the year. This allows for some initial response and/or clarification, which is recorded in the Exam Board minutes. It also allows for a narrative summary of responses to any previous year's issues.

2.77 The external examiner sends a draft of the narrative elements of his report directly to the College and the formal report goes to the University.

2.78 The report is then circulated to the appropriate working group (undergraduate or postgraduate) and responses are formulated. The reports are also circulated to all members of faculty and posted for students on the VLE. The Working Group Chair then writes to the examiner regarding the College's response to the report.

2.79 The arrangements for external examining would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.80 The team reviewed evidence of external examiners through an audit trail provided by the College, meeting minutes, annual reports and action plans. The team also met students, staff and faculty and viewed the VLE with respect to this topic.

2.81 Issues raised by external examiners are diligently followed up by the College. Actions taken in response to external examiner reports are auditable through the inclusion of issues in the College's Action Plans and in the annual monitoring exercise, which is addressed by the University Collaborative Academic Adviser and then submitted to the University's Academic Panel. Examples of issues raised by external examiners and addressed recently include working with the University to consider descriptors for 70 to 100 per cent grades, and the suitability of the anti-plagiarism software used by the College.

2.82 Academic staff at the College are encouraged to serve as external examiners. Nine of the current 13 permanent staff members have done so.

2.83 External examiner reports are made available to students on the College VLE.

2.84 The College thoroughly and consistently acts on the issues highlighted by external examiner reports. There is a clear process for doing so and it is robustly followed. The reports are shared widely and faculty at the College also serve as externals. The team therefore finds that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.85 The University has a set of relevant policies, regulations and processes relating to programme monitoring and review for its awards delivered through partnership. The College has integrated its own monitoring and review processes and policies with these. The College is also subject to PSRB requirements for review and monitoring.

2.86 The College follows the University's annual monitoring process, the aim of which is to ensure the maintenance of academic standards and improvement of the student experience. The process operates at a number of levels and involves an annual reflection on the preceding academic year and action planning for the upcoming academic year. The process includes reflection on teaching, learning and assessment data, student feedback, support for learning, the learning environment, curriculum and teaching organisation, staff development, and student engagement. Any issues that need to be addressed, and other planned developments, form part of the annual monitoring action plan, which also indicates the responsibilities and timescales of actions. The report is considered by a joint meeting of the undergraduate and postgraduate working groups.

2.87 As part of the College-specific process, the Dean submits a biannual report to the Colleges' Academic Board which allows the Boards to review the academic activity of the College in the context of the College's strategic priorities. Academic Board also receives a detailed report on completions, which describes achievement over the previous three-year period. The College has recently commenced submitting Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. This submission is considered by the College's deliberative structure and is a standing item on the faculty agenda. The College currently has a retention rate of 90 per cent. From an examination of relevant reports, meeting minutes and discussions with College staff, the team formed the view that the College is assiduous in verifying, analysing and responding to data related to academic progression and achievement. In addition, the Registrar reports twice a year to the College's Academic Board, Administrative Council and the Board of Governors on enrolment data, to inform strategic fiscal projections and priorities for course development.

2.88 The College is also subject to quinquennial periodic and institutional review as part of the University's quality process. This reviews the College's portfolio of programmes, testing among other items the continuing validity and relevance of programme aims and learning outcomes, and the College's management of its programmes. Periodic review is usually undertaken in conjunction with institutional review, which takes a more institutional perspective. The process is based on a self-evaluation document produced by the College, which sets the context for the review. The event is chaired by a representative of the University and includes external subject specialists.

2.89 The design of these policies and processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.90 The team considered the minutes of relevant committees, including the academic board and the undergraduate and postgraduate working groups. Policy and procedure documents relating to annual monitoring and institutional and periodic review were scrutinised, and meetings were held with a range of academic staff, support staff and senior managers.

2.91 The team noted that the annual monitoring process was wide ranging in its scope and addressed issues of both academic standards and quality. The annual reports are considered by the College's undergraduate and postgraduate working groups, which include staff and student representation, and also by Academic Board. Actions are properly taken forward. It was noted that the College had recently amended its processes to include a departmental review of course units, considering both student evaluations and unit outcomes, and the intention is that this process will also consider Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data. While it was clear to the team that the College considers overall course success and achievement data, the team noted that there was no clear evidence that the annual monitoring process takes any detailed account of progression and achievement at course unit level. Doing so may help course teams and the College as a whole to identify more completely the factors involved in the success of some units as compared to others. The team therefore **recommends** that the College makes more evaluative use of progression and achievement statistics in the annual monitoring of course units.

2.92 The most recent periodic and institutional review exercise (in 2011) identified a number of useful developmental opportunities, which were properly taken forward and acted upon.

2.93 The team concludes that the College's processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are clearly defined and implemented and that the College generally makes robust use of data to identify and plan to address any issues, although there is an opportunity to include the analysis of module progression and achievement data to direct enhancement activity further. Overall, the team concludes that the College meets the Expectation in both design and operation, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.94 The College's procedures for handling student complaints and academic appeals are clear and accessible. The process begins with the College but the student has the right to appeal beyond the College to the University, and from there to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Initially, the emphasis is on informal resolution. The College's small size and cooperative ethos encourage and facilitate this, but where informal resolution fails, or is inappropriate, the College's formal procedures for addressing student complaints and appeals are straightforward and well signposted.

2.95 General information relating to grievance resolution appears in the Student Essential Guide while more detailed information concerning the formal Complaints and Appeals procedures is found in the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks and on the VLE.

2.96 The policies and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.97 The team tested the College's approach to complaints and appeals by scrutinising documents including the complaints and appeals procedures, student handbooks, the website and the VLE, and by speaking with students, who confirmed that they understand the procedures and know where to find the relevant information.

2.98 The College's formal Complaints Procedure has recently been reviewed and revised to offer a straightforward step-by-step process to students who wish to lodge a formal complaint. The College has also introduced an Academic Appeals Form to make the appeals process easier and to make it clear that students who choose to lodge an appeal will not be disadvantaged.

2.99 The revised procedure will require the submission of an annual report to the Faculty and the Board of Governors detailing the number and nature of complaints and identifying any general issues that may have arisen. This more systematic approach is intended to increase confidence in the appeals and complaints processes and to provide information about recurring problems, which can then be acted upon at a strategic level.

2.100 The team considers that the College's procedures for handling appeals and complaints are fair, accessible and well understood. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.101 As the College does not award its own degrees, the consideration of this Expectation is in relation to arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body, such as the placement experience and the management of those opportunities with various employers.

2.102 Two BA (Hons) degree pathways require a placement. Students have input into the placement that they will undertake, but it is the College's responsibility to identify, organise and manage that placement. Those pathways are the Youth Work and Ministry Pathway and the Practical Theology Ordination Pathway.

2.103 Placements form an important and substantial part of these BA (Hons) degrees. Students are required to participate in one long placement and one short placement. The former runs alongside their coursework during the academic year and lasts for two academic years. The latter is an intensive summer placement.

2.104 The College supports the provision with a Placement Manager and Placement Leader, and a lecturer overseeing the Professional Practice class. Students are assigned a line manager on site and also a Practice Tutor. The Practice Tutor is an independent third party. The placement sites are carefully vetted by these staff. If the placement is not local to the College, staff use contacts local to the placement to visit and make the necessary checks. The Placement Leader is responsible for assuring that University guidelines are met. The College is also a member of ASET, the Work Based and Placement Learning Association. There is also a Placement Committee which meets regularly to review each student's progress.

2.105 Students participate in a Professional Practice class alongside the placement experience. This class provides an opportunity for students to reflect on the experience, get support for their portfolio assessment and identify the skills they are building through the placement.

2.106 Students are provided with Placement Handbooks which are comprehensive and provide a thorough explanation of the expectations, aims and logistics of the fieldwork experience. The appendices to these handbooks include feedback forms for students and placement line managers to complete.

2.107 Line managers are hosted at a Line Manager Evening where they are provided with information on what is expected of them, the student and the College.

2.108 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.109 The team tested the Expectation by meeting with placement line managers, students on placements and staff and faculty involved in the placement process. The team also evaluated documents including handbooks, student feedback and orientation materials.

2.110 The handbooks are very detailed and cover a comprehensive range of information, including the roles and responsibilities of all parties, support for students with assessed

needs, and learning agreements. Students and line managers are given appropriate opportunities to provide feedback to the College.

2.111 The centrality of the placement experience to the undergraduate degree means that it is regularly reviewed. The College took into account feedback on the placement experience in terms of the significant time and commitment required and, in working with the awarding body, doubled the credit hours granted for successful completion of the placement.

2.112 There is an indication that the Professional Practice class topics might not be fully synchronised with respect to the needs of students and employers. A later start date for the placement (October) has been put in place to address this concern and to ensure that students are appropriately prepared for their placement before commencing it. The College will want to evaluate this new arrangement in due course.

2.113 In theory, there is a robust structure in place to assure that students are being appropriately supported at the placement site and that their learning needs are attended to in a structured way. This includes appropriate assessment and monitoring and respect for the awarding body regulations. While students and employers were, on the whole, positive about the experience, concerns from these constituents were raised with relation to communication not being as effective or timely as required to support the learning experience. Employers and students provided a significant number of examples where long delays in responses from the College and miscommunications have resulted in missed assessments or lack of clarity over responsibilities. The College has acknowledged these issues and already has a plan of action to remedy the situation to assure the quality of the placement learning experience. Therefore, the team **affirms** the steps being taken to improve communication among all involved in the provision of placement learning.

2.114 Overall, the Expectation is met, but the lack of clear and timely communication poses a moderate level of risk to the provision.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.115 With respect to research degrees, the College's partnership with the University differs from the arrangements that govern taught degrees. The College's Research Degrees Committee (RDC) recommends the admission of postgraduate research students, approves research proposals and programmes of study, appoints supervisors and nominates external examiners, but all these recommendations are subject to approval and annual monitoring by the University.

2.116 Research students are registered students of both the College and the University and have full access to the range of resources available from both institutions. The College provides prospective students with detailed information about the admissions process and an overview of what will be expected of them if their application is successful. Once a proposal has been accepted by the RDC, the application and supporting documentation, including details of proposed supervisory arrangements, are forwarded to the University for its consideration.

2.117 At the beginning of the 2015-16 academic year there were 48 registered research students at the College, 41 of whom were studying part-time and many of whom lived outside the UK. Part-time and overseas research students are required to be in residence on the College campus for four weeks every June. During this residential period the College organises a One-Day Theology Conference and hosts the annual Manchester Wesley Research Centre Colloquium, while the University holds an annual Research Day for research students, with a guest lecturer and workshops. In addition to the campus-based residential period, the College holds an annual week of research seminars in the USA for its North American research students and is collaborating with Cliff College to deliver the new practice-based PhD (Missiology) which also includes a residential period.

2.118 Supervisory arrangements are governed by the University's Code of Practice, which students are advised to download and read at the earliest opportunity. When the University admits an applicant, the College appoints two (or occasionally three) supervisors, all of whom hold a PhD, are research-active and have been approved by the University. At least one member of each supervisory team will have prior experience of successful research supervision.

2.119 On admission, research students are provided with a comprehensive postgraduate research handbook covering every aspect of their programme of study and are introduced to eProg, the University's digital monitoring and progression platform (although students registered before September 2013 remain on the old paper-based system). eProg is used to record correspondence and meetings with supervisors, to identify skills development or training needs and access the resources to address them, to complete mid-year and annual monitoring reviews and to allow supervisory teams to maintain an overview of student progression.

2.120 The College's procedures and processes for the provision and management of research degrees would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.121 The team tested the College's approach through meetings with staff and campus-based research students and by talking to two overseas students by telephone. The team also reviewed a range of documentation, including University regulations, the Research Student Handbook, supervisor training opportunities, Progress Monitoring Reports, committee papers and policies and procedures relating to thesis submission and examination.

2.122 The application process is handled in a robust and transparent manner and all recommendations for admission are evidence based. Candidates are given detailed guidance and support in the preparation of their research proposals, and applicants who have any deficiency in their academic history are advised on what remedies they should pursue.

2.123 All supervisory arrangements conform to or exceed the requirements of the University's Supervision Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees. Main supervisors maintain frequent informal contact with resident research students and have at least monthly contact with overseas students. Contact with secondary supervisors depends on the nature of the expertise they bring to the project and on the needs of the student. As a minimum they are required to be involved in approving probationary and annual reviews. Students also have a Research Adviser (normally the Director of Research or the Dean) who provides additional academic and pastoral support.

2.124 Research student progression is recorded on the University's eProg system and is closely monitored by the RDC, which reviews every student at its quarterly meetings and recommends any necessary action. The eProg system is currently being updated and this has caused some problems in uploading data, but the majority of the students whom the team met were enthusiastic about its operation. They also commented favourably on the research seminars and presentations organised by the College, the doctoral training workshops provided by the University and the opportunity to undertake a limited amount of supported teaching in the College.

2.125 The College submitted its first HESA return in 2015, which showed a research student retention rate of 98 per cent. College data sources are also used to monitor and evaluate student progression and achievement so that problems can be detected and remedial action taken at an early stage. In 2014 this scrutiny identified a small and unexpected increase in the number of thesis referrals and the College responded by strengthening the annual review process to include an explicit appraisal of progress towards a viable thesis.

2.126 Students and staff agreed that the most important feature of the research student experience at the College is the opportunity to be part of a vibrant and enriching research community. The residential periods enable students to establish stimulating and supportive relationships with their academic supervisors, their pastoral advisers and their peers. The rich and active research environment, which ensures that students receive the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees, is **good practice**.

2.127 Overall, the team considers that the College's provision and management of research degrees is carried out in an environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.128 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Part B of the Quality Code, summarised in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.129 All 11 Expectations in this area have been met, with a judgement of low risk being reached in all but one case.

2.130 There are three instances of good practice. For Expectation B3, the comprehensive range of staff development opportunities available to all staff makes a significant contribution to the quality of the overall student experience. In Expectation B4 the highly supportive learning and pastoral support environment recognises and meets the individual needs of students effectively. Finally, in Expectation B11 the rich and active research environment ensures that students receive the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

2.131 One recommendation is made within Expectation B8 regarding the need to make more evaluative use of progression and achievement statistics in the annual monitoring of course units. There is also one affirmation of action already being taken, involving Expectation B10, in which the team affirmed the steps being taken to improve communication among all parties involved in the provision of placement learning.

2.132 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College's website and prospectus provide stakeholders with a wide range of appropriate, accessible and accurate information about the institution, its programmes of study, its validation arrangements, and its mission and values. Both the website and the printed prospectus include comprehensive information on the curriculum, the academic, social and pastoral environment, and the facilities and support services offered by the College. At the time of the review visit the website was being redesigned and the updated version was expected to be launched in the near future.

3.2 To ensure that all published information continues to be accurate, transparent and accessible, the College has recently collated its policies and procedures into a single Public Information Policy and Procedures document. The document aims to ensure that all stakeholders can form an accurate impression of the College and make properly informed decisions, as well as securing compliance with legal obligations and data protection regulations.

3.3 The College takes active measures to meet its obligations concerning published material, and the committees and individuals who are responsible for different areas of communication are clearly identified. The Administrative Council has overall responsibility for the quality of published information and is required to conduct an annual review of the Public Information Policy and its implementation. The undergraduate, postgraduate and research student handbooks are produced under the authority of the Academic Office and are approved by the Dean. They are submitted annually to the University's Collaborative Partnership Administrative Officer for review and approval prior to distribution and circulation. New programme specifications and any subsequent amendments are also submitted to the University for approval and the Registrar ensures that the website and VLE are updated accordingly.

3.4 These practices and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.5 The website and prospectus clearly articulate the mission and ethos of the College and convey an accurate and realistic account of the student experience. They provide extensive information on entry requirements and admissions procedures for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including research degrees, and an outline of the programmes of study. Fee information is also published on the website together with information about student loans, scholarships and bursaries. Information for international students, including guidance on visa restrictions and language requirements, can be found in a clearly signposted area on the website.

3.6 Students are provided with a range of printed and electronic information to support their induction and studies. The student handbooks contain detailed and comprehensive guidance on all aspects of College life and helpful information about the local environment. Within the College a range of methods are used to convey information to students, including noticeboards, email, the internal mail system and regular face-to-face meetings between

students and staff. A weekly bulletin containing information about upcoming events and deadlines is emailed to all students and a printed version is posted on campus. The students whom the team met confirmed that they found the information on the website and the VLE to be clear, accessible, informative and accurate.

3.7 Training is provided to support staff engagement with the VLE, and the Registrar's audit ensures that minimum requirements are met. Innovative use of social networking platforms is encouraged, subject to the stringent guidelines laid down in the College's Social Media Policy.

3.8 Students can view their academic progress to date through the College's Student Management System, and on completion of their programme of study and following the meeting of the Board of Examiners, they receive a copy of their academic transcript. The formal award certificates are produced by the University and are presented at the annual graduation ceremonies.

3.9 Overall, the team considers that information about learning opportunities at the College is clear, comprehensive and trustworthy. The 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 opportunities: Summary of findings

3.10 In reaching its judgement about the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Part C of the Quality Code, summarised in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.11 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice.

3.12 The College provides information about learning opportunities that is clear, comprehensive and trustworthy.

3.13 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College has a variety of institutional approaches to enhancing the student experience over time, with these approaches including the explicit promotion of a College enhancement agenda, the quality assurance mechanisms adopted by the College that identify and address enhancement opportunities, and the active and extensive participation of staff in a number of development opportunities that serve to support the enhancement agenda.

4.2 The College's strategic intention to enhance quality is made clear in its Strategic Framework 2015-2020 document, which lays out five College strategic objectives including the intention for the College to be to be 'academically excellent and research led' and to enhance its 'reputation for excellence'. The College's strategic objectives are more fully developed in the College's 'Strategic Objectives' document, which develops and aligns the College's major academic activities to the achievement of these strategic objectives and articulates the steps that need to be taken to achieve them.

4.3 The College also identifies and addresses enhancement opportunities, through the academic quality processes of the College, and through those of the awarding body. Thus the College elicits student feedback, reviews the comments of external examiners, and identifies issues through the annual monitoring processes and through programme review and institutional review. The intention of these academic quality processes is to identify and address both local issues and College-wide enhancement opportunities.

4.4 The College also noted the central role of subject dialogue between members of faculty and the provision of, and participation in, scholarly and professional activities and staff development as a means of sharing good practice, and enhancing the quality of the student experience across the College.

4.5 The approach taken by the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.6 The team considered the minutes of the senior leadership team, academic board, the undergraduate and postgraduate working groups, and subject area meetings, and reviewed documentation related to the College and University's quality assurance process and records of the College's staff development opportunities. The team also met with a range of academic and academic support-related staff and senior managers.

4.7 The College has clear enhancement objectives and has identified the institutional lead for ensuring that these objectives are met. There is active support by the senior leadership team for achievement of these objectives through consideration at the senior team meetings, and during the senior management team annual retreats. There is substantial discussion of the College's strategic objectives by the academic board, faculty, and undergraduate and postgraduate working groups. The team also noted the role of the research degrees committee in addressing developments designed to enhance the research student experience.

4.8 There is extensive participation of staff in a wide range of staff development activities, with some of these activities being provided by the College and others provided

externally (see also paragraphs 2.23 to 2.27). Staff engage with the HEA and with other professional bodies.

4.9 Extensive engagement and exchange of good practice take place through engagement with colleagues in the College. The undergraduate and postgraduate working groups are interdisciplinary and serve as a forum for shared practice, and staff retreats and away days serve to take forward the strategic enhancement agenda. There is also engagement and exchange of good practice through close links with another partner of the University offering programmes that fall in the same discipline area as that of the College, and this relationship has allowed the sharing of expertise between the two institutions.

4.10 Through the quality assurance mechanisms, and programme monitoring and review in particular, there is a clear identification of institutional issues and institutional solutions. The College has also recently introduced a departmental review of course units designed to bring together teaching staff in each subject area to consider student evaluations and unit outcomes. However, it was noted that there is at present no overview of module-level progression and achievement (see paragraph 2.91).

4.11 In summary, the team concludes that the College has a range of deliberate steps in place at institutional and local levels to ensure the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.12 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against criteria specified within the Quality Code, summarised in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.13 The College has a range of deliberate steps in place at institutional and local levels to ensure the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.14 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no instances of good practice, recommendations or affirmations identified.

4.15 On the basis of the documentation provided and meetings with staff and students, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 Employability is at the core of what the College does. Its mission and vision put heavy emphasis on the need for an education appropriate to the needs of the ministry and its work. The College states that it aims to 'shape and equip people for innovative Christian ministry for the twenty-first century' and has the 'practical relevance' to prepare learners for vocational work within religious studies, youth work and ministry.

5.2 The degrees on offer at each level speak directly to this mission. Two undergraduate degrees offered have a required placement component. New master's degree pathways are highly relevant to employment in allied fields. The MA pathway in Compassionate Ministry and Humanitarian/Development Practices is aimed to develop those working in the charity sector and in aid work. Likewise, the pathway in Theology and Community Justice is geared towards those in chaplaincy and probation, police or youth services.

5.3 The College's PhD programme in Missiology is another indication of the focus on employability in that the research is practice-based, inspired by the context in which it is currently operating.

5.4 Employability has been purposeful in the design and monitoring of degrees and the engagement with employers. Employers sit on Course Boards and Governance subcommittees. They are also involved in the design of awards, such as for the MA in Compassionate Ministry where local and international charities were asked to contribute. The College is a member of ASET (The Work Based and Placement Learning Association).

5.5 Students have access to a careers adviser who delivers employment seminars and holds one-to-one meetings to provide feedback on Morrisby Profiles and individual attention. Personal Development Plans are used in meetings with personal tutors to guide students in their studies but also to help the transition into careers following graduation.

5.6 The placements undertaken by BA students on two of the pathways provide substantial engagement with practice over a two-year period. Students participate in two placements, one intense summer placement and the other over two academic years. The placement experience has recently been re-evaluated in relation to credit load to assure that it appropriately reflects the volume of assessment and time in placement. Despite some administrative difficulties with placement arrangements, there is a formal infrastructure that the College has built and students and employers highly value the experience.

5.7 Both on-site and distance PhD students remarked on the close relationships with their supervisors and other faculty and the encouragement and support received in relation to their development as scholars. Research students are involved in conference presentations and publications. They also have the opportunity to participate in the University's Graduate Teaching Assistant training scheme, which allows them to take up opportunities at the College to act as a teaching assistant and to assist in marking.

5.8 The College has taken forward the QAA Annual Monitoring Report 2015 comment on student destination data and collected this data for the first time in 2015. In reflecting on this data, the College has made an enhancement to careers provision and has offered a careers fair over two days on campus as an opportunity for students to explore further their options after completion of their award.

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 22-25 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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