Application for Taught Degree Awarding Powers:
NCH at Northeastern Limited
(t/a New College of the Humanities)

Scrutiny team report

October 2019

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About this report

This report reflects the findings of a team appointed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to conduct a detailed scrutiny of an application from NCH at Northeastern Limited (then known as Tertiary Education Services Ltd), trading as New College of the Humanities, for the power to award taught degrees.

The application was considered under criteria approved by Government in 2015. In advising on applications, QAA is guided by the relevant criteria and the associated evidence requirements. QAA's work in this area is overseen by its Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP), a subcommittee of the QAA Board.

ACDAP's initial consideration of applications establishes whether an applicant has made a case to proceed to detailed scrutiny of the application and the evidence on which it is based. If satisfied on this matter, ACDAP agrees that a team may be appointed to conduct the scrutiny and prepare a report, enabling ACDAP to determine the nature of the recommendation it will make to the QAA Board.

Scrutiny teams produce reports following each of the engagements undertaken. The final report reflects the team's findings and is structured around the four main criteria contained in the 2015 TDAP criteria,[1] namely:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes.

Subject to the approval of the Board, QAA's advice is communicated to the appropriate minister. This advice is provided in confidence. The minister determines whether it should be disclosed to the applicant. A final decision on an application, and the notification of that decision, is a matter for the Privy Council.

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[1] The TDAP criteria are available in Annex A of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' *Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers: Guidance for Higher Education Providers: Criteria and Process for applying for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers* (September 2015) at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/526813/BIS-15-525-degree-awarding-powers.pdf (PDF, 535KB)

Executive summary

Governance and academic management

NCH at Northeastern Limited (NCHNL), trading as New College of the Humanities (NCH; the College), admitted its first students in 2012. Founded as Tertiary Education Services Limited (TESL), the College was acquired by Northeastern University (NU) of Boston, USA in February 2019. It offers undergraduate awards of Solent University and taught postgraduate awards of the University of Swansea. In 2019 it had 210 students, mainly undergraduates, and 48 academic staff.

The College has significant strengths. Its clear and distinctive educational mission, centred on a liberal arts curriculum and a one-to-one teaching model, is being taken forward with good academic leadership and is shared by staff and students. The NCHNL Board, on which senior members of NU are in a majority, expresses clear support for the mission, and Northeastern University has the resources to provide appropriate financial backing for the College. Governance and management structures are clear, and committees and key individuals work effectively. Appropriate and coherent policies and procedures are in place and are kept under review, with a sound approach to quality and standards. The College is in a position to manage its additional responsibilities should taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) be granted.

While financial planning and management and recruitment practices are appropriate and robust, and resources are managed effectively, the College is a small institution that is very heavily dependent on student fees. Significant effort is put into recruitment and student numbers are rising, but NCH recruitment targets remain challenging. The NCHNL Board has expressed the view that targets are achievable, anticipating that OfS registration and access to student loans (together with TDAP, if granted) will significantly increase recruitment. There is a generally appropriate approach to risk, and the risk register is fit for purpose.

The College is based in Bloomsbury, London. Its present building is not large enough to fully accommodate growing numbers of NCH and NU students, and there are some issues as regards accessibility, offices and social space. Because the present building's lease expires in 2022, alternative options are being actively explored, and it is quite possible that the College will move to a different building before 2022, with appropriate planning taking place for this.

The NCHNL Board expresses a supportive and flexible approach in relation to these challenges and issues, following full due diligence before acquisition. NU has significant financial strength, but it expects the College to achieve a break-even position, which means that current predictions for student numbers will need to be largely achieved.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that NCH at Northeastern Limited (trading as New College of the Humanities) meets Criterion A.

Academic standards and quality assurance

The College has an appropriate regulatory framework in place to govern the award of its higher education qualifications if TDAP were to be granted. It has developed a detailed Academic Quality Framework which draws upon existing practice with appropriate modifications, where appropriate, to reflect its distinctive mission and educational ethos, and which provides a secure basis for the College to grant its own taught degree awards. *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) is used to ensure that the academic standards set and achieved are in line with UK national higher education (HE) expectations, and external examiners' reports consistently

confirm that this is the case. The College actively engages with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

Robust quality assurance policies and procedures are in place; an experienced Quality Team ensures that they are implemented consistently, and that the College is fully compliant with external expectations and regulations. Effective channels of communication are in place for the provision of information on its academic policies and procedures to both staff and students through College meetings, committees, the website and the College virtual learning environment (VLE). Monitoring of its provision is detailed and comprehensive. A commitment to improvement and enhancement, and to engagement with students and staff, is embedded in its academic management structures. The College makes appropriate use of external expertise in monitoring its provision and in its curriculum planning. Meetings of committees, boards and other forums with academic management responsibilities are well conducted, documentation is comprehensive, and action points are continuously monitored. Assessment processes are consistently and effectively managed.

NCH has a successful record of engagement with QAA and has recently been admitted to the Office for Students (OfS) Register of higher education providers. The current awarding universities affirm the College's preparedness to assume its own taught degree awarding powers, although with the proviso that it only has a limited track record with regard to postgraduate awards.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that NCH at Northeastern Limited (trading as New College of the Humanities) meets Criterion B.

Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff

Academic staff are committed to teaching and learning, to the College and its teaching model, to the students, and to research. Their academic and professional expertise is affirmed by students and was demonstrated throughout the engagement with the scrutiny team. A large majority of academic staff are qualified at doctoral level and almost all are research-active. Fewer have pedagogical qualifications, but the College aspires to a position where all faculty members have either a Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowship or a teaching qualification. There is a relatively low level of engagement by teaching staff with other higher education institutions as external examiners or academic reviewers.

The College operates a clear human resource (HR) strategy and system for the selection, recruitment, appraisal and development of staff. A comprehensive induction programme for new teaching staff is scheduled to allow them to attend the annual Staff Conference and training days, and a probationary appraisal meeting, with a Head of Faculty and the Master, is held in a new academic's fifth teaching term. Annual appraisals are conducted in May-July by Heads of Faculty, supported by a member of the Human Resources team.

Research is overseen by the Research Committee, which reports to Academic Board, and supported by Research Officers at institutional and Faculty levels. A Research Strategy is being developed; it was originally intended to be in place by 2018-19, but at the end of that academic year the College was aiming for final approval by the Academic Board in October 2019. Collegium, a regular meeting of staff with the Master, and the College's Ottoline Club provide forums for discussion of staff research activity. A recently introduced academic staff workload planning model specifies that a substantial proportion of staff time will normally be spent in research activity. Annual research grants and opportunities to take periodic research leave are offered. NCH's recent OfS registration is expected to create opportunities for the College to access external research funding, and in this connection there is a need for development of skills in writing grant applications.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that NCH at Northeastern Limited (trading as New College of the Humanities) meets Criterion C.

The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes

The College aims to provide an outstanding personalised higher education experience to all students. Its approach to teaching and learning, centred on the essay-based, one-to-one tutorial model, is set out in a recently reviewed Teaching and Learning Strategy 2019-24. Mechanisms used to monitor the quality of teaching and learning include observation of teaching, and student feedback obtained through Staff-Student Liaison Committee and other committees including Academic Board. There is an appropriate variety of opportunities for staff development.

Peer observations of teaching are carried out annually. In addition, new academic staff are observed within five weeks of the start of their first term by their head of Faculty. Observations have recently been expanded to include a short session of feedback from students. Outcomes of observations are discussed at annual staff appraisals and in key College committees. Students confirm that assessment feedback is generally both timely and helpful. Return times are clearly stated in course guides, all deadlines are met, and they receive feedback within two to three weeks, on average. Written feedback comments are constructive and developmental. Essay feedback is also given orally in one-to-one tutorials.

Students receive thorough inductions, which are monitored for quality. Students said that their induction process had given them an accurate overview of what to expect at the College. They are generally satisfied with the provision of learning materials, and the library resources provided at Senate House Library fulfil their needs. With its growing student population in mind, the College plans to provide additional library and other resources, particularly through its link with NU.

The College effectively oversees and manages the information that it produces concerning its higher education provision. This information is accurate in most cases, and when it has been found to be misleading, it has been corrected promptly in response to student feedback. Equal opportunities policies are implemented effectively, and NCH has taken special measures to secure appropriate accessibility in nearby buildings for disabled students, because the current listed building has limitations in this regard.

The College actively engages with the student body, ensuring they are involved as partners. Many options are available to them to give feedback to the College and they are actively kept aware of the progress of any changes made as a result. Policies are in place to address academic complaints or appeals confidentially, through processes which are well publicised and readily accessed. Engagement and support of staff is effective overall, with numerous opportunities for them to give feedback in meetings, though not through anonymised surveys. The College engages with a range of employers, mainly informally or through the LAUNCH programme, but there are very few formal or structured ways in which employers can give feedback and advice on the College's programmes.

The team's view of the College can be summarised fairly in the words of the overarching requirement for DAPs. It is 'a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to quality assurance supported by effective quality and enhancement systems', which nevertheless faces significant challenges in relation to financial stability and student recruitment.

On the basis of these findings ACDAP concludes that NCH at Northeastern Limited (trading as New College of the Humanities) meets Criterion D.

Privy Council's decision

The Privy Council's decision is to grant NCH at Northeastern Limited (trading as New College of the Humanities) renewable taught degree awarding powers for a fixed six-year term beginning on 24 February 2020 and expiring on 23 February 2026.

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the work and findings of the scrutiny team (the team) appointed by QAA to review in detail the evidence submitted in support of an application for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) by Tertiary Education Services Ltd (now New College of the Humanities at Northeastern Ltd), trading as New College of the Humanities.

The application was considered by QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP) in February 2018, when the Committee agreed to proceed to the detailed scrutiny of the application. The team appointed to conduct the detailed scrutiny comprised Ms Sarah Bennett, Professor Susan Blake, Professor Nicholas Goddard, and Mr Stephen Murphy (scrutiny team members), and Ms Kathryn Powell (secretary). The detailed scrutiny was managed on behalf of QAA by Mr Alan Hunt, independent consultant.

The detailed scrutiny began in March 2018, culminating in a report to ACDAP in November 2019. In the course of the scrutiny, the team read a wide range of documents presented in support of the application. The team also spoke to a range of stakeholders and observed meetings and events pertinent to the application.

Key information about NCH at Northeastern Limited

NCH at Northeastern Limited, trading as New College of the Humanities (NCH; the College), was founded in 2011 and admitted its first students in 2012. Founded as Tertiary Education Services Limited (TESL), the College was acquired in February 2019 by Northeastern University, a not-for-profit research university which is based in Boston, Massachusetts, USA and is the centre of a global network of distinctive higher education institutions.

The College's mission is to be 'a world-class university-level college in the heart of London'. Located in Bloomsbury, it 'combines a unique liberal arts curriculum with one-on-one teaching in an international community to ensure that every student prepared to work will achieve their full potential and leave fully equipped to face the challenges of our increasingly complex world'. It aims 'to provide an outstanding university-level education in the Humanities, and to do so at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. The desired outcomes are a deep and insightful engagement with the subjects of study, and in the process, acquisition of acuity of thought, reasoning power, knowledge of methods and sources, and learning, writing and discursive skills, all exportable into lifelong learning and applicable to the demands of work and life after graduation'.

To these ends the College offers 56 undergraduate degree programmes in various combinations of Philosophy, Politics, Economics, History, Literature, Creative Writing, Philosophy, Art History, Politics and International Relations, Law, and Economics. Taught postgraduate degree programmes are offered in Philosophy, Global Politics, Communicating Economic Policy, and Historical Research and Public History. All currently offered programmes are designed by the College and lead to awards of Solent University (undergraduate) and Swansea University (postgraduate).

The College's student population in June 2019 totalled 210 (197 undergraduates and 13 postgraduates), of whom 116 came from the UK and 78 from elsewhere in the EU, with 16 internationals.

In its seven Faculties (Art History, Economics, English, History, Law, Philosophy, and Politics and International Relations) the College employs 48 academics (23 full-time, three part-time, and 22 fixed-term), and 25 full-time and two part-time professional staff.

QAA carried out a Higher Education Review (Plus) of the College in February 2015. The review team's judgements were as follows:

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies 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.

QAA, at its most recent monitoring visit in February 2019, found that the College was making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision since the previous monitoring visit in February 2018.

Detailed scrutiny against taught degree awarding powers criteria

A   Governance and academic management

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Criterion A1

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers is governed, managed and administered effectively, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. Its financial management is sound and a clear relationship exists between its financial policy and the safeguarding of the quality and standards of its higher education provision. In the case of an organisation that is not primarily a higher education institution, its principal activities are compatible with the provision of higher education programmes and awards.

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Financial planning, quality assurance, and resource allocation policies are coherent and relate to the organisation's higher education mission, aims and objectives

1   New College of the Humanities (NCH; the College) has distinctive aims and objectives that include a strong focus on the benefits of studying the Humanities, a commitment to small group and one-to-one teaching, an interdisciplinary approach (with major and minor subject choices), and a requirement that all undergraduates study critical reasoning, science literacy and ethics as part of a non-credit bearing Diploma. The College sees itself as a 'high-end academic institution' devoted to the most aspirational outcomes in teaching, learning and research. This approach is enshrined in the Strategic Plan and associated documents, and in the recently revised Teaching and Learning Strategy. The scrutiny team heard strong support for this mission from staff at all levels and from students, who may choose to attend the College for its one-to-one teaching.

2   When it was set up, and at the start of the TDAP scrutiny process, New College of the Humanities Ltd was a wholly owned subsidiary of Tertiary Education Services Ltd (TESL), which comprised shareholders who contributed capital to establish the College, and had the sole purpose of running it. The TESL Board was made up of non-executive directors appointed by the shareholders, and three executive directors who were the most senior staff at the College (the Master, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and the Executive Dean). In February 2019 Northeastern University (NU), based in Boston, USA and accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education, purchased the entire share capital of TESL. Thus the College became the New College of the Humanities at Northeastern Limited (NCHNL), a not-for-profit company registered in the UK and wholly owned by NU. Key factors in the College's acceptance of the offer were that NU is a well-established, large, not-for-profit institution with a good international reputation; moreover it showed interest in the educational model that is part of the NCH mission, and was prepared to support and potentially to spread the use of it. The new NCHNL Board comprises five senior NU staff and two external Board members, with the Master remaining a member of the Board, the COO becoming Company Secretary, and the Executive Dean attending Board meetings. The transfer was managed with care, and the College kept staff and students informed through interactive briefing sessions as these changes took place. The team heard strong and consistent assurances from internal managers and from the NCHNL Board that the educational mission of the College is seen as very important and will remain the same, that the ethos of NCH and of NU fit well together, and that staff and students view the transfer to NU positively.

3   Current institutional strategy is set out in the NCH Strategic Plan 2017-21, approved in April 2017 by the TESL Board. This enshrines the approach of protecting and enhancing

the College's mission as set out above. Key strategic objectives include obtaining TDAP, developing more programmes and methods of delivery, forming partnerships and collaborations with other higher education institutions, and potentially the establishment of the NCH model in other jurisdictions. It also has a strategic target to grow to 1,000 students as an important part of building financial sustainability. The College Executive Committee (ExCo) is responsible for reviewing progress in relation to the Strategic Plan, with input from Academic Board. The NCHNL Board will be reviewing the position to approve a new Strategic Plan for 2021 onwards, but it is committed to maintaining the current mission and ethos, and will take time to evolve the new plan. Potential ingredients of a new strategy are growing and differentiating programmes, developing a research strategy, and developing student learning, possibly incorporating some NU ideas such as placements ('co-ops'). Internal staff feel more positive about planning ahead with the relative financial security provided by NU, and see likely developments as including the introduction of more master's programmes, and a widening of the undergraduate programme offerings.

4   The TESL Board set and monitored three-year budgets and targets, engaging with the challenges and exploring options for further funding, and partnership or sale. It changed policy on fees, which were initially set at a high level, to equal the government capped figure and thus to increase applications. Since February 2019 the College has been registered with the Office for Students (OfS), providing access to student loans. NU, which has assets worth over one billion US dollars, has provided a financial guarantee to support College students. The financial position of the College, including the financial guarantee from NU, was disclosed to the OfS in the application for registration, which has now been obtained.

5   The Recruitment and Marketing teams take a strategic, detailed and proactive approach, well aware that recruitment is a key strategic target. There are regular and detailed reviews of actions and effectiveness, and recruitment is closely monitored. Annual targets are close to being met, assisted by OfS registration and access to student loans, and growing recognition of the NCH brand, although actual recruitment each year tends to lag a little behind predictions. The NCHNL Board is open to some flexibility if targets are not met, aware that meeting recruitment targets remains challenging. NU expertise is being used to develop marketing processes, as the NCH Recruitment and Marketing teams have been collaborating with their counterparts at NU. There is a commitment to maintaining the NCH ethos and one-to-one teaching as student numbers grow. While there will be some joint activities between NCH and NU students, the principle is primarily one of parallel development, with largely separate bodies of staff teaching and supporting NCH and NU students.

6   Estates strategy is also key to financial and resource planning. Since it was founded the College has been based in a building in Bedford Square, using additional teaching space rented within ten minutes' walk where necessary. While the building has aesthetic character, it is not large enough to accommodate fully the growing numbers of staff and students, and there are also some issues as regards accessibility, offices and social space. The current lease will expire in 2022, and alternative options are being actively explored. In addition to the growing body of NCH students, further teaching accommodation is needed for the NU students in London, currently taught in separate rented space. The future will either involve the continued use of two buildings (close together, and not necessarily those currently used), or a move to a single building capable of appropriately accommodating all NCH and NU students. Internal managers and the Board expressed a strong preference for remaining in the Bloomsbury area, though another appropriate central London area might be considered if necessary to secure appropriate accommodation for educational use. Plans for funding the building have not yet been finalised, and the scrutiny team heard from the Board that financial input from NU might be involved. Currently the favoured option is a move to a single

building in Fitzroy Square, subject to successful applications for change of use and for planning permission, both of which have been submitted.

7   The Resource Allocation Policy states that allocation of resources will be informed by the need to uphold high standards and quality of provision, and the scrutiny team found that this approach is followed. Implementation is the responsibility of the Resource Allocation Group (RAG); this is chaired by the COO and the Master, Executive Dean and senior managers are members. The team found that detailed discussions at RAG show sound consideration of the budget, thorough coverage of relevant areas, and concern to balance needs with likely income from student numbers. Budget setting and resource allocation processes are well understood and realistic. RAG makes recommendations to SMT, which reports to ExCo and the Board. Provisional budgets are set annually in February and finalised when student numbers are known. This timeframe includes provision for consultation with Heads of Faculty and budget holders, and the team saw evidence of effective Faculty-level consideration. While there are some areas where further resource would be useful (for example research, information technology and staff development) staff were generally positive about resourcing. Students also raised some issues about resources, but said that requests for resources were generally addressed. The team formed the view that, within the restrictions on the resources available, resource allocation was well managed.

8   The financial challenges facing the College are significant, primarily because increases in student numbers have so far been steady, but slow and relatively modest. Overall, the scrutiny team found a very strong focus on the College's distinctive mission and on continuing to ensure the quality of education, and that this is being maintained by the NCHNL Board. Financial management is sound, following a Financial Management Strategy, reapproved by the current Board, and a clear financial model. Day-to-day financial and resource management lies with ExCo, the COO and the Financial Controller. Monthly management accounts and annual audited accounts are properly prepared and are regularly and fully considered by relevant internal committees and by the Board, together with detailed budgets and forecasts. The planned growth in student numbers is challenging, but the NCHNL Board has expressed the view that targets are achievable, not least because it is anticipated that OfS registration and access to student loans (together with TDAP, if granted) will significantly increase recruitment.

Higher education mission and associated policies and systems are understood and applied consistently both by those connected with the delivery of the organisation's higher education programmes and, where appropriate, by students

9   The College's distinctive and clear educational mission is well understood and strongly supported by the NCHNL Board, managers, staff and students. The NCH mission is also supported by a Learning and Teaching Strategy, which has recently been reviewed and approved in a revised form. Until recently all the College's academic policies and procedures were set out in the NCH Academic Handbook. However, during 2018-19 a comprehensive Academic Quality Framework (AQF), a key part of the College's preparations for a potential grant of TDAP, has been developed by the Quality Team and academic staff, gradually populated with revised policies and procedures, and progressively considered by the Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee (TLEC) and approved by Academic Board.

10   Academic Board, supported by its committees, reviews and approves new and amended academic policies and procedures. The Head of Quality Assurance (HQA) is responsible for drawing all documentation together coherently. Documents from the NCH Academic Handbook, and now from the AQF, are available to staff and students on the website. Staff become familiar with academic policies and procedures through their

membership of relevant committees, and developments are also communicated to staff through Collegium, a meeting open to all staff, which meets at least once a term to receive updates from the Master and to discuss College activities. The scrutiny team found that Collegium worked well in providing updates on many aspects of teaching and research, as well as other matters such as the use of space and timetabling, and that staff were familiar with relevant policies and procedures. There is also an annual two-day training event for staff, and the HQA convenes an annual Open Forum for all staff and students. The COO holds fortnightly meetings to update professional staff. NCH higher education policies and systems are made available to students through the website, and through student handbooks. Familiarity with NCH systems is also supported by the relatively small size of the College.

There is a clarity of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its governance structures and systems for managing its higher education provision

11   A clear approved organisational governance and committee structure, and role descriptions for individuals, have been most recently approved by the NCHNL Board. A governance review was carried out in 2016-17, taking into account relevant national guidance and practice in higher education providers of similar size. College staff were consulted, and the governance structure was approved by the TESL Board and Academic Board in April 2017, coming into force in September 2017 with the approval of an NCH Committee Handbook. Although there have been some amendments over the last couple of years, the overall approach to structures and systems is well embedded and understood. While the acquisition of NCH by NU has inevitably led to a substantial change of members at Board level, there has been limited change in other functions or responsibilities. The scrutiny team's observations of the TESL Board and associated agendas, minutes and papers showed a background of reasonably efficient governance. The TESL Board was well run with good chairing and discussion, and systematic and effective reporting from other committees and individuals, though with some tendency for reports to be oral rather than written.

12   Since February 2019, the NCHNL Board has been responsible for strategic and financial matters, and all major decisions. The Board comprises five senior members of NU staff, with the NU General Counsel as Chair. There are also two external members of the Board, one with high-level knowledge and understanding of UK higher education and the other with commercial expertise. A skills matrix is used to determine membership. The Master is also a member of the Board, and there will be a student member who has yet to be appointed. The Chief Operating Officer is Secretary to the Board, and the Executive Dean attends meetings. The Board normally meets monthly except in August and December. The Board has Remuneration, Nominations, and Audit and Risk subcommittees, with their own chairs and memberships. These committees formerly met separately, but they now meet as part of Board meetings (save that the Master is not part of the Remuneration Committee). The scrutiny team heard that NCHNL Board members feel that the new Board has bedded in, appropriately addressing key issues of financial stabilisation and planned growth, and that internal managers are comfortable with the operation of the new Board. There are no plans for changes to committee structures or roles, but the effectiveness of the Board and its committee structure will continue to be evaluated.

13   The new NCHNL Board operates efficiently. Although the NU members of the Board are based in Boston, a minimum of the Chair and/or Vice-Chair travel to London for Board meetings, and there are arrangements for Board members in Boston to attend through high-quality video link. As regards their capacity to oversee English higher education provision, Board members clearly have much significant insight into higher education matters, though primarily from a US perspective. One independent member and the Master

have high-level English higher education expertise, as does the COO as regards regulatory aspects. Two of the other NU Board members have studied at higher education institutions in England. At induction, Board members were briefed on English regulatory frameworks and UK/USA higher education differences, in addition to a briefing on their duties as Board members and charity trustees. The scrutiny team formed the view that while there is clarity of function and responsibility at Board level, and knowledge of UK higher education requirements is adequate, there is some fragility in a reliance on a single independent Board member with relevant and substantial expertise in the English higher education system. That Board member might be absent from a Board meeting, with the result that less detailed and up-to-date independent rigour might be applied, albeit that an important decision would be unlikely to be taken in such circumstances.

14   The Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for all academic matters, under delegation from the NCHNL Board. It is chaired by the Master and comprises the Registrar, the Heads of Faculty, the Dean of Careers, the Head of Quality Assurance, the Research Officer and a student representative. There is also an external member with higher education expertise appointed by the Master. Academic Board takes a clear academic lead in developing and reviewing policies and processes, showing an understanding of academic requirements. For example, it took the lead in developing the AQF and revising the Teaching and Learning Strategy, and it also considers assessment processes and annual monitoring reports. The scrutiny team found that Academic Board worked effectively in terms of agendas, minutes, and staff involvement, though at times the approach can be quite discursive. The College Boards Liaison Committee (CBLC) is described as the link between Academic Board and the NCHNL Board dealing with, for example, strategic and risk management matters. This committee meets twice a term and comprises a small group of senior managers. There is significant overlap of membership and function with other committees and, although the terms of reference have been revised, the particular and discrete role of this committee was not clear to the team, given that it does not appear to report actually and formally to Academic Board. It has little paperwork and does not make formal reports; instead, the Master personally reports from Academic Board to the NCHNL Board.

15   The Academic Board has several subcommittees. The Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee (TLEC) has significant responsibilities in relation to developing policies and practice as regards teaching, and enhancing teaching, learning and assessment across all programmes, usually to be passed to Academic Board for approval. It also maintains an overview of curriculum and learning resources, receiving the minutes from Faculty meetings. TLEC is chaired by the Registrar, and membership includes the HQA, the Quality Manager, Heads or members of Faculty and student representatives. Staff members told the scrutiny team that Academic Board and TLEC work together effectively, as TLEC carries out detailed preparatory work for Academic Board. The scrutiny team saw good levels of discussion and staff involvement at TLEC, though there is room for some further consideration of what goes to each committee. The Research Committee, the Assessment Board, the Policy and Compliance Committee, and the Destinations Committee are also subcommittees of Academic Board.

16   Faculty meetings report to TLEC. They are chaired by the relevant Head of Faculty, and comprise staff and student representatives (though part of their agenda is for staff only). They cover a wide range of areas including teaching, class content, timetabling, library provision, research, careers and recruitment. The scrutiny team found that these meetings are effective, with a good level of discussion including student involvement.

17   Internal management of the College lies with the ExCo, and the Senior Management Team (SMT). The ExCo comprises the COO (in the chair), the Master, the Executive Dean and a member of the NCHNL Board. ExCo agendas systematically cover all

main areas of management including finance, recruitment, estates, and resource allocation. There is good alignment with the work of the Board, including financial, key performance indicators and risk reports. The scrutiny team found that the ExCo works effectively and provides systematic oversight, with a tight focus on matters like finance and recruitment. The SMT meets monthly and deals effectively with operational matters, though it is not a decision-making body. The Recruitment and Marketing teams also meet regularly and work effectively.

18   As regards individual responsibilities, the Master chairs Academic Board and Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC), and is a member of NCHNL Board and of the ExCo. He is responsible for the coordination of both academic and non-academic areas. The Registrar is responsible for managing the production of definitive records for programmes, courses and students, including working with the validating bodies, for managing professional staff and areas such as timetabling and assessment, as well as overseeing the operation of Academic Board and its subcommittees. The HQA is responsible for quality assurance and enhancement on all programmes, working with the Quality Manager to manage validations, reviews, annual monitoring and student surveys.

19   Overall the scrutiny team found that there is clarity of function and responsibilities, both for committees and individuals; these are well understood across the institution and work effectively. Management of the programmes for NU students in London will remain with NU as regards curriculum, assessment and quality assurance, but NCH will be responsible for teaching, pastoral support and the student experience in London. A committee has been set up to coordinate the teaching and pastoral care of the NU students, within the context of NU requirements.

There is depth and strength of academic leadership across the whole of the organisation's higher education provision

20   Academic leadership lies primarily with the Master, who has been the prime mover in establishing and embedding the distinctive educational mission and identity of the College. His academic leadership is articulated and reflected in many ways, for example in the development and range of programmes offered, recruitment of staff and visiting staff, the development of policies, and in the character of the College as it is presented and communicated to current and prospective students. The scrutiny team found that staff and students understand and fully support the Master's vision.

21   At the next level, academic leadership is provided by Heads of Faculty, who oversee the work of the Faculty teaching staff teams, taking oversight of the development and management of the curriculum, and liaising with external examiners and students to ensure effectiveness of delivery. Because Heads of Faculty chair Faculty meetings, and are also members of Academic Board and Assessment Boards, they are well placed to fulfil a coherent role in the running and development of the College. At course level, Course Leaders are responsible for delivering and assessing courses in accordance with validation documents. Senior Tutors have responsibility for the student experience. The Head of Research chairs the Research Committee and the Research Ethics Committee. The NCH Diploma Team is responsible for the core curriculum in that area. Overall the scrutiny team found that there is coherent and appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership at all levels.

The organisation develops, implements and communicates its academic policies and systems in collaboration with those responsible for the delivery of its higher education programmes, and with relevant stakeholders

22   Academic policies and systems reflect the College mission, the types of programmes that are delivered (focusing on the Humanities), and the requirements of the

current awarding bodies. Initially students were prepared for BA, BSc and LLB degrees of the University of London International Programmes (and a few of these students are still completing their programmes), but, since 2015 internally designed bachelor's degrees have been validated by Solent University. Four MA/MSc degrees, designed internally, were validated by Swansea University in 2016 and 2017. All undergraduate students can select major and minor areas of academic study, and take a core curriculum programme leading to a non-credit rated Diploma that includes the LAUNCH programme, which prepares students for the world of work. A full range of academic policies and systems are in place to support this provision. Internal staff have been significantly involved in programme design and implementation, with academics from the awarding institutions benchmarking and overseeing development.

23   Academic policies are developed by and implemented under the oversight of Academic Board and TLEC, with the full involvement of Heads of Faculty, and quality assurance and other staff who are members of those committees. Through this committee activity, College staff have been fully involved in developing the new AQF. Student involvement is encouraged by the Student Engagement Statement, and there are student representatives on all key committees such as Academic Board, TLEC and Faculty meetings. The Student Union, NCHSU, has eight officers who may be involved in institutional developments, but they do not have sabbatical positions. Employers are directly engaged in delivering some elements of the NCH Diploma programme, but there are no systematic arrangements for employers to be involved in programme development. The College also has processes for involvement of relevant external stakeholders through regular contact with external authorities such as the OfS (and previously the Higher Education Funding Council for England), the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, and with external examiners. There is engagement with relevant external professional bodies, such as the Solicitors Regulation Authority. Overall, the scrutiny team found that the College works with a range of stakeholders in developing provision, although there is scope for more direct involvement of potential employers in programme design as well as delivery.

Academic policies, systems and activities are monitored and reviewed, and appropriate and timely action is taken when deficiencies are identified

24   The implementation of policies and systems is monitored under the Monitoring Plan for Governance Structure in a process led by the HQA. Committees review their terms of reference regularly, and the HQA keeps a record of modifications. High-level academic policies such as the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy and the Teaching and Learning Strategy are continually monitored to ensure they are being followed, and are fully reviewed every few years. Annual monitoring of academic activities takes place, and leads to action plans which are monitored. Students told the scrutiny team that points they raised led to effective actions. As the institution is relatively new, no periodic reviews of programmes have yet taken place, but periodic review will commence soon, either following the grant of TDAP, or under the policies of the validating bodies. As a matter of principle and policy, all institutional policies and regulations relating to students, staff or external regulation are regularly reviewed. Reviewing is monitored by the Policy and Compliance Committee, reporting to Academic Board, which is responsible for approving all academic policies. Review processes are tracked on a detailed spreadsheet, and the scrutiny team found that the review of policies is up to date. Overall, the team found that processes for monitoring and review are effective and lead to action (for examples see paragraphs 37 and 52).

Higher education activities take full account of relevant legislation, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and associated guidance

25   The College takes full account of the Quality Code and associated guidance, using it to inform and underpin policies, procedures and practice across the institution.

Responsibility for this lies with the HQA and the Quality Manager, who maintain a detailed spreadsheet to plot how the Quality Code is followed. Changes to the Code are considered by Academic Board or at ExCo as appropriate. Undergraduate degree programmes are mapped to Subject Benchmark Statements, and benchmarking is supported by academics from awarding institutions. The scrutiny team found that academic committees and individual staff members showed good understanding of the Quality Code and associated guidance, and that relevant aspects are explained to the Board where appropriate. The HQA can sit on any College board or committee where quality assurance issues are at stake, and the Policy and Compliance Committee has a role in ensuring that regulatory and quality assurance requirements are met. The team was satisfied that the Quality Code and associated guidance are taken into account systematically.

Academic risk and change management strategies are effective

26   The College's Risk Management Strategy is owned, reviewed and approved by the ExCo, which reports on this matter to the NCHNL Board. A risk register is maintained using a traffic light system, and this is updated, reviewed and reapproved by the Board annually. The risk register has been reapproved by the NCHNL Board, on the basis that the Board focuses on major risks, with oversight through its Audit and Risk Sub-Committee, and the Board will ask for an interim update where key facts change. The team found that the risk register is fit for purpose, and risks are actively discussed by a range of committees, but the register is focused at a relatively high level and, while there is general risk awareness, risks are sometimes considered and appropriately addressed without specific reference to amending the register. Strategies to manage risk are in place, and risk is appropriately managed, but the approach could be a little more coherently focused on the risk register. A disaster recovery plan, a Business Continuity Plan and a Student Protection Plan are in place. There is no written change management strategy but, in practice, the significant change involved in the transfer of ownership to NU was constructively and effectively managed, with regular identification and management of issues, and good communication to staff and students.

Robust mechanisms are in place to ensure that the academic standards of the organisation's higher education awards are not put at risk

27   A strategic aim of the College is 'to create an institution that delivers higher education to standards at least comparable to those found in the best UK higher education institutions'. A full range of documents and mechanisms are in place to define and maintain academic standards. These include Assessment Regulations and Guidelines, policies and processes for setting and marking assessments, and Assessment Boards. Programmes are aligned with the FHEQ. The scrutiny team found that these are all appropriate and function effectively. The maintenance of standards is confirmed by the external examiners, and by the current awarding bodies.

The organisation has the capability of managing successfully the additional responsibilities vested in it were taught degree awarding powers granted

28   The AQF (paragraphs 9-10) builds on models used by the College's awarding bodies, and at other English higher education institutions, with thought given to what would work best at the College. The framework codifies current practice and is already partly implemented in that relevant sections are already in use. It contains some differences from past practice, for example as regards marking schemes and classification rules, where the views of internal academic staff and external examiners have been taken on board (paragraph 49). The approved sections are available to staff on the internet, and to students where they are already in use. A Handbook for External Examiners has also been approved.

The staff required to meet additional responsibilities, should TDAP be granted, are in post or appointments are being costed and built into budgets.

29   The College's current validating bodies, the University of Swansea and Solent University both express the view that the College is capable of successfully managing the additional responsibilities, should taught degree awarding powers be granted, and the scrutiny team endorses the view that everything is in place, or is part of current planning, for this to be the case.

B   Academic standards and quality assurance

> **Criterion B1**
>
> An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has in place an appropriate regulatory framework to govern the award of its higher education qualifications.

The regulatory framework governing the organisation's higher education provision (covering, for example, student admissions, progress, assessment, appeals and complaints) is appropriate to its current status and is implemented fully and consistently

30   The College has developed a regulatory framework which appropriately governs its higher education provision. The scrutiny team observed a number of meetings of the Academic Board and Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Committee (TLEC) which are the key forums for the oversight and development of institutional academic policies and procedures and these observations confirmed that their terms of reference are discharged effectively and consistently. They are conducted expeditiously with comprehensive documentation and action points are continuously monitored, as standard agenda items, by Academic Board and TLEC.

31   Appropriate policies are in place to provide a framework for key academic areas, such as student admissions, teaching and learning, assessment appeals and complaints. Consistency in their implementation is achieved by such means as staff training days, meetings of academic staff at both faculty and whole-College level (Collegium), and by the effective oversight exercised by an experienced Registrar and the Quality Team. Observations of Assessment and Progression Boards confirmed that the regulations of the validating universities are meticulously observed.

The organisation has created in readiness a regulatory framework which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education awards

32   The College has a clear statement covering the procedures governing the adoption of degree awarding powers from its current validating universities. This provides a timeline for the roll out of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, which recognises the possibility that not all students will elect to transfer to an NCH award. The College Registrar and the Quality Team have led on the management of changes, including changes to regulations, working closely with faculties. In preparation for TDAP the College has prepared a comprehensive Academic Quality Framework (AQF). This is informed by the College's Strategic Plan, its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy, the distinctive College pedagogic model - its Teaching and Learning Strategy, and external reference points. Fourteen substantive chapters were complete and had been approved by the Academic Board at the conclusion of the scrutiny. They are detailed and comprehensive and, in the view of the scrutiny team, provide a secure basis for the College to grant its own taught degree awards.

> **Criterion B2**
>
> An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for defining and securing the academic standards of its higher education provision.

Higher education awards are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the Qualification Frameworks

33   Chapter 2 of the AQF, which provides an overview of the College's teaching and learning strategy, explicitly states that the FHEQ is used to ensure that the academic levels of College awards are set and achieved in line with UK national higher education expectations, and that the levels achieved are clear to both internal and external stakeholders. For each award, the College states a benchmark definition of levels aligned with the FHEQ, and this requirement is an integral part of the College's course development and review process. External examiners are required to confirm that academic standards are appropriate to the award with reference to the FHEQ and any relevant national subject benchmarks, and their reports consistently affirm that this is the case.

Management of its higher education provision takes appropriate account of the Quality Code, characteristics statements; credit frameworks; relevant subject benchmark statements; and the requirements of any relevant professional and statutory bodies

34   College policies and the AQF make explicit reference to the Quality Code and any changes to the Code are monitored by the Head of Quality Assurance. The College Policy and Compliance Committee is responsible for ensuring that the College meets the expectations of external stakeholders including QAA and relevant professional and statutory bodies, and this committee discharges its responsibilities effectively. The College's successful Higher Education Review (Plus) (February 2015) and subsequent QAA monitoring reports (2016, 2018, 2019) also confirm that the College is actively engaged with the Quality Code. In 2017 the College was successful in gaining Qualifying Law Degree (QLD) status from the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) for its single honours and law major programmes.

35   The College has developed a suite of policies to meet the expectations of the Office for Students (OfS). These include a Student Protection Plan and an Access and Participation Plan and the College has completed a Consumer Protection Law self-assessment. The OfS has confirmed that the College is not at higher risk of non-compliance with the Prevent Duty. The College gained OfS registration in May 2019.

In establishing, and then maintaining, comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level programmes, the organisation explicitly seeks advice from external peers and, where appropriate, professional and statutory bodies

36   The Academic Board terms of reference make provision for an external representative from a higher education institution and its deliberations benefit from this external input. It is a key part of the College's Internal Programme Approval Policy that the development of new programmes is informed by external expertise and approval panels have an independent representative from another higher education institution. As noted at paragraph 34, the College engaged with the Solicitors Regulation Authority in the course of development of its portfolio of law programmes. The role of external examiners in verifying that academic standards are appropriate to the award and comparable to those of other providers are clearly set out in the External Examiners Handbook. The College's external

examiners confirm that its academic standards are equivalent to ,or exceed, those of comparable institutions.

Programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, applied consistently, have at all levels a broadly based external dimension and take appropriate account of the specific requirements of different levels of award and different modes of delivery

37   The College has developed a robust and comprehensive Programme and Course Approval and Modification Policy as part of its Academic Quality Framework. This clearly specifies the roles of Senior Management, Heads of Faculty and Course Leaders and makes provision for external input from equivalent higher education institutions, and student participation through panel membership. The Registrar and Head of Quality Assurance ensure that the arrangements and procedures are consistently applied, although the scrutiny team did not have the opportunity to observe the process in operation as an approval event did not take place during the course of their scrutiny. The annual monitoring arrangements are robust and comprehensive and provide effective oversight of institutional quality and standards.

There is an explicit and close relationship between academic planning and decisions on resource allocation

38   The College's Resource Allocation Policy has been designed to support the College Mission and the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan 2017–21. The Resource Allocation Group makes recommendations to the ExCo on income targets, allocation of expenditure based on strategic priorities, and capital expenditure. This meets with Faculty Heads as part of an annual cycle of resource allocation where detailed staffing requirements are reviewed and bids made by discrete subject areas. As the one-to-one teaching model makes considerable academic staffing demands, the appointment of additional sessional staff is closely linked to student recruitment data and forecasts. Staff planning is also informed by the recently introduced academic staff workload model. Data is very comprehensive and the scrutiny team found that there was constructive liaison between those with responsibility for the delivery of College provision, including support services, and the RAG. The acquisition of additional space for teaching and academic/administrative offices as well as for more staff/student social areas is a current resource priority which is being addressed at Board level.

Criterion B3

The education provision of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers consistently meets its stated learning objectives and achieves its intended outcomes.

Strategies for learning and assessment are consistent with stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes

39   The College's current Strategic Plan 2017-21 recognises that teaching and learning informs all aspects of its mission and that it seeks to deliver a distinctive curriculum which incorporates depth and breadth within a carefully defined pedagogical framework. To achieve this, the majority of undergraduate students study for a combined honours degree with a major and a minor element. Its Teaching and Learning Strategy, which was updated and re-affirmed in 2019, has at its heart a pedagogical model based on a regular one-to-one essay-based tutorial combined with 'small group' sessions, seminars and lectures. Undergraduate programmes are strongly interdisciplinary in nature. The College Undergraduate Assessment Policy requires that assessments are explicitly aligned with intended learning outcomes, which are stated in programme specifications and approved

as part of the course development and review process. The Assessment Policy is supported by comprehensive and detailed Assessment Regulations and Assessment Practice Guidelines, which have been revised in preparation for TDAP.

Relevant staff are informed of, and provided with guidance on, its policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review

40   Oversight of the provision of information and guidance on policies and procedures for programme design, monitoring and review at College level is the responsibility of the Registrar and Heads of Faculty, whose roles are explained to new academic staff at their induction. The College website clearly sets out the relevant documents which are readily accessible. Information is also provided through such forums as Collegium and staff training days. The scrutiny team concluded that the means of communication of these and other academic policies are effective and that staff are well-informed.

Responsibility for amending or improving new programme proposals is clearly assigned and subsequent action is carefully monitored

41   Regular academic reviews, including the amendment or modification of new programme proposals, are a part of the College Teaching and Learning Strategy. Although programmes are approved for five years, responsibilities for the implementation of modifications are clearly assigned in Chapter 4 of the AQF. The Quality Team supports relevant academic staff in the preparation of modifications which, after consultations with students and external examiners, are presented to the Academic Board for approval. Final approval currently resides with the relevant awarding body. Recent examples include modifications to the English and Politics and International Relations programmes and the Ancient Philosophy course. The scrutiny team concluded that the mechanisms in place work effectively for both major and minor course modifications.

Coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained

42   It is fundamental to the College's mission that its undergraduate Humanities programmes are interdisciplinary in approach and the majority therefore contain major and minor elements. In addition, the programmes are supported by the non-credit bearing compulsory Diploma which comprises Critical Reasoning, Science Literacy and Applied Ethics and the LAUNCH programme, which prepares students for the world of work. The scrutiny team recognises the essential coherence of the College's curriculum model, which is overseen by the Master and the Quality Team. The procedures for Programme Approval and Modification are designed to secure coherence as new subject areas, such as Law (2017) are added to the College portfolio of provision. These procedures have been used effectively.

Close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning, approval, monitoring and review arrangements

43   The College's Facilities Strategy has been designed to support its Mission by ensuring that the physical environment and its facilities support the programmes so that the mission can be delivered effectively. This contributes to the College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy. The regulations for the approval and modification of programmes have been designed to ensure that learning and other resources are adequate and available to support programme delivery and students, and that the learning environment is fit for purpose. Documentary evidence provided by the undergraduate law programme, and a range of master's programmes approval events, which took place before the scrutiny, confirm that these regulations are used effectively.

Robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those students that may be studying at a distance from the organisation are adequate

44   The College has no provision of this kind.

Through its planning, approval, review and assessment practices, the organisation defines, monitors, reviews and maintains its academic standards

45   The College has a comprehensive suite of policies that frame its procedures for the conduct of planning and approval of courses and programmes and their review. Its policy on Programme and Course Approval and Modification clearly sets out the division of internal responsibilities in the design of new programmes and courses or the modification of existing programmes. Programme approval events enable the College to evaluate the academic strengths, standards and quality of the provision. Modifications to programmes may be made between approval and Periodic Review to enhance provision in response, for example, to student feedback or changes to Professional, Statutory and Professional Body (PSRB) requirements. In addition to the College annual review process, the Academic Quality Framework focuses on the management of the quality of provision and the maintenance of academic standards over (typically) a five-year period. Current College programmes have yet to undergo periodic review and the scrutiny team was assured that this would be a priority if the College were to be granted taught degree awarding powers. The team concluded that assessment regulations for the College's taught awards are comprehensive and that assessment practices are carefully aligned with learning outcomes to maintain academic standards.

Assessment criteria and practices are communicated clearly to students and staff

46   Assessment criteria and practices are clearly communicated to students and staff through the clear, detailed and comprehensive Academic Handbook, which is available on the College website, and by Programme Handbooks readily available on the College VLE. These contain detailed information on learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills, and the assessment strategy. Information on all aspects of assessment practice is provided in the College Undergraduate Assessment Policy, Assessment Regulations, Assessment Practice Guidelines, and course handbooks. Students confirmed that this information is clear and helpful and that they are well-informed on assessment criteria and practices.

Assessment practices fully cover all declared learning objectives, learning outcomes and modes of delivery

47   The College's Assessment Practice Guidelines provide detailed guidance on a variety of College assessment practices including written, oral and practical examinations, coursework, presentation, problem sets and other exercises. The Guidelines address learning objectives, outcomes, and modes of delivery, and all learning objectives are appropriately assessed. Assessments are subject to effective internal and external review, as external examiners confirm.

Appropriately qualified external peers are engaged in the organisation's assessment processes and consistency is maintained between internal and external examiners' marking

48   The College's external examiners are mostly drawn from Russell Group universities. The first five external examiners for undergraduate programmes were appointed in 2015. One stepped down at the end of the academic year 2017-18, and four were due to step down at the end of the academic year 2018-19. At the conclusion of the scrutiny, arrangements were in place for the appointment of their replacements for the new academic

year 2019-20. External examiners work to a detailed and comprehensive set of College regulations which reflect those of the respective awarding bodies. An appropriate revised set of regulations is in place for use if the College is granted TDAP. Only occasional discrepancies between internal and external marking were observed by the scrutiny team and these were readily resolved. External examiners readily affirm the appropriateness and consistency of College academic standards, and the effectiveness of internal moderation of assessments.

The reliability and validity of the organisation's assessment procedures are monitored and its assessment outcomes inform future programme and student planning

49   The reliability of assessment procedures are monitored through the College's monitoring and review procedures. All assessment outcomes are scrutinised at the annual Progression and Awards Boards. Where performance on individual courses significantly deviates from the College benchmark, they are identified as 'outliers' and may be subject to investigation and, if necessary, remedial action. The regulatory framework that the College has prepared in readiness for TDAP has made adjustments to the common undergraduate assessment scheme, aspects of which have been subject to critical comment by external examiners, particularly the awarding university's regulation on the boundary between an upper second and first class mark.

Clear mechanisms are in place for use when a decision is taken to close a programme or programme element, and in doing so, students' interests are safeguarded

50   The College has a Temporary Suspension of a Programme Policy constructed for prospective students, but it has not yet been necessary to put this into operation. It has achieved a smooth transition from the preparation of Law students for the University of London International Programmes (ULIP) to its own undergraduate Law programmes which were approved in 2017. The College Student Protection Plan makes detailed provision for the safeguarding of students' interests in the event of course closure and has been approved by the OfS.

Criterion B4

An organisation granted taught degree awarding powers takes effective action to promote strengths and respond to identified limitations.

Critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the organisation's higher education provision and action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review

51   The College has developed its own framework for critical self-assessment as part of its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy. The College undertakes its own internal annual monitoring procedures in addition to the returns that it is required to provide for its validating partners. The Annual Monitoring Reports are detailed and cover the College teaching and learning strategy objectives, student progression rates and records of achievement by course, course performance, a review of comments by external examiners, student feedback and resources. Reports have detailed action plans with timelines for implementation actions arising from, for example, student feedback and comments from external examiners. Heads of Faculty introduce their reports to the Academic Board, which maintains oversight of programme review and enhancement and monitors the implementation of the action plans. In addition to the oversight of the Academic Board, TLEC conducts mid-point reviews of Faculty action plans and reports progress to the Academic Board. Examples of effective action taken as a result of internal and external monitoring and

review include changes to the means of obtaining student feedback and modifications to the common assessment scheme.

52   The scrutiny team found that the programme monitoring undertaken by the College is thorough and contributes effectively to the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of the student experience. As part of the development of the College Academic Quality Framework Annual Monitoring and Reporting, the full range of annual reports produced by the College have been reviewed. These include an Annual College Report, Student Survey Results Report, External Examiner Reports, Partner Annual Reports, and an Operational Annual Report which ensures that the College's policies and procedures are fit for purpose and that various operational activities are effective and efficient. All these reports, where relevant, have been incorporated into the revised AQF chapter covering monitoring and annual review.

Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny, monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives and intended outcomes

53   Action in relation to the scrutiny, monitoring and review of agreed learning objectives and intended learning outcomes is shared between the Quality Team, Heads of Faculty and Course Leaders. As outlined in paragraph 51, all programme s and courses are reviewed as part of the annual monitoring procedures. This provides an opportunity to evaluate the quality and standards of the College taught provision, including the appropriateness and achievement of learning objectives, and these annual reviews are informed by external examiners' reports. Peer reviews of assessments comment on whether assessment tasks set enable students to achieve learning outcomes and this is also provided by link tutors at the validating universities. External examiners are required to report on the effectiveness of assessments and to consider and determine whether the College's programmes are meeting their stated objectives and to ensure that any necessary improvements are made.

Ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation (for example on programme design and development, on teaching and on student learning and assessment) are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval and review

54   The College's original Internal Programme Approval Policy (paragraph 36) required that programme development teams drew upon external input, and that the internal approval panel included an external representative from another higher education institution. External input remains an important component in the updated policy and procedures as part of the College's Academic Quality Framework. As noted above (paragraphs 12, 36) provision for an external member of the Academic Board is an important way in which external expertise contributes to all matters relating to the College's academic quality and standards. Faculty forums allow for appraisal and evaluation of programmes, with opportunities for staff and students within each Faculty to provide feedback. As the number of NCH graduates increases, the College plans to make use of their expertise and experience in the development of College activities, including new programmes.

Effective means exist for encouraging the continuous improvement of quality of provision and student achievement

55   The College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Strategy aims to enhance and ensure the development of first class academic processes, programmes, quality assurance, and academic facilities in the context of its TDAP application as part of its Strategic Plan 2017-21. The TLEC, which reports to the Academic Board, has within its terms of reference a broad commitment to the improvement of the quality of College provision and student achievement. Enhancement is also embedded in the terms of reference of other College

committees such as Faculty meetings, Collegium and SSLC. Collegium, for example, is a forum to share practices and research activities and for the discussion and dissemination of external reviews, student surveys and the sharing of best practice on teaching and learning enhancements. The College attaches considerable importance on student participation to inform appropriate paths for improvement and, based on the scrutiny team's observation, the team concluded that the means provided for continuous improvement were effective

C   Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff

> **Criterion C1**
>
> The staff of an organisation granted powers to award taught degrees will be competent to teach, facilitate learning and undertake assessment to the level of the qualifications being awarded.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant academic and/or professional expertise

56   The College's academic staff are committed to teaching and learning, to the College and its teaching model, to the students, and to research. They demonstrated appropriate academic and professional expertise throughout the engagement with the scrutiny team. A large majority of academics (38) across all Faculties are qualified at doctoral level. Faculty resource allocation meetings provide an annual opportunity for each Head of Faculty, with the Master and COO among others, to reflect on the academic staffing base required for the ensuing academic year. The College recognises that staff numbers will need to be increased to support its planned growth in student numbers (paragraph 5).

57   Students who met the team clearly acknowledged the expertise of teaching staff and appreciated their ability to support learning, specifically through comprehensive and effective use of the individual tutorial model as outlined in the recently updated Teaching and Learning Strategy 2019-24.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline (through, for example, membership of subject associations, learned societies and professional bodies)

58   The College aspires to a position where all faculty members have either a Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowship or a teaching qualification, and is committed to this aim. Twenty members of academic staff are members of learned societies or subject associations. Fourteen have obtained HEA fellowships, 11 have teaching qualifications, and eight hold both.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant knowledge and understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline area and such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching

59   A clear goal of the College is to be a 'self-critical community of research active staff' and research is expected to inform curriculum design, delivery and assessment. Almost all (41) members of teaching staff are research-active, mainly through authoring books, chapters of books, publishing in peer-reviewed journals or presenting at conferences.

60   The Research Committee, which reports to Academic Board, oversees research at institutional level. The Head of Research, appointed on a three-year basis, chairs the Research Committee and supports the continuing development of the research ethos and opportunities across the institution. Each Faculty has a designated Research Officer, and is represented on the Research Committee. Through this committee a Research Strategy is being developed. The College intended that this strategy should be in place by 2018-19, but the process of development continued throughout the scrutiny period. A draft Research Strategy was not available at the end of the 2018-19 academic year, when the scrutiny team was informed that a draft strategy was still in development, and the College was aiming for final approval at its Academic Board meeting in October 2019.

61   The Research Committee's role is complemented by that of Collegium (paragraph 10), at which a wide range of research-related matters and opportunities are discussed by staff. Collegium, which also reports to Academic Board, more generally provides a forum for discussion of a wide range of academic matters and College developments. The College's Critical Self-Analysis highlighted the development of E-Collegium as a means to continue academic discussion and thought between Collegium meetings. However, this has still to be fully deployed and is expected to be considered as part of the College's future reflections on the development of any future e-strategy.

62   The College also operates several subject-specific research groups and some interdisciplinary groups, including the Cognitive Science Research Group, which run seminars and workshops. The work of these groups is typically reported into Collegium.

63   The recently introduced academic staff workload planning model, which includes an expectation that 720 hours (out of a total of 1,700) will normally be dedicated to research activity, is expected to give substantial support to academics' research activity. Further potential opportunities for research have been presented through the merger with Northeastern. The College has also entered into partnership, through a Memorandum of Understanding, with University Centre Shrewsbury in 2018, to develop research opportunities in a particular field of shared expertise. The recent achievement of OfS registration will open opportunities for the College to access external research funding. In this connection the College acknowledges a need for development of skills in writing funding bids and grant applications.

64   A key element in NCH's approach to research is the award of annual research grants and opportunities to take periodic research leave. Grants of up to £1,000 are made to permanent staff and £200 for sessional staff, to support research or scholarly activity such as attendance at conferences and purchases of equipment and books. Such grants are monitored throughout the year at College level through a research grant tracking spreadsheet. During 2018-19 the College has moved to a position whereby research expenses are now subject to retrospective approval, to minimise obstacles to such activity.

65   Permanent faculty members can apply for one term's research leave in every nine terms, subject to approval by the Research Committee and endorsement by the Master. Staff must submit an application for consideration outlining their proposal. However, it was noted that some staff have found it difficult to remove themselves from all College activity – for example, the marking of assessments – while on research leave, because full cover had not always been provided within their Faculty. On their return from research leave, faculty members submit a report to the Research Committee summarising their activity and its outcomes. Research leave outcomes and progress are also presented to the annual staff conference. This also provides an opportunity for staff to consider how research might inform teaching and future curriculum development including master's provision.

66   The College's Ottoline Club provides regular occasions when academic staff across all disciplines can meet to give and discuss research presentations and papers. The Club has met more than 60 times since its inauguration in December 2012, and 12 times during 2018-19. It is facilitated by a member of faculty, currently a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Philosophy.

All higher education teaching staff have relevant staff development and appraisal opportunities aimed at enabling them to develop and enhance their professional competence and scholarship

67   The College operates a clear human resource (HR) strategy and system **f**or the selection, recruitment, appraisal and development of staff. Details, including a timeline of the

process during the academic year, are captured in the Staff Handbook, and a further overview of staff recruitment and development is given in the AQF.

68   The induction process for new academic staff is scheduled to allow them to attend the annual Staff Conference and training days. The scrutiny team observed that the induction was comprehensive and included: an introduction to the use of the HR portal; the annual appraisal process; the need for their teaching to be observed by the Head of their Faculty within five weeks; a short outline of the College's quality assurance system including programme validation and annual monitoring; the governance structure; and the importance of the student voice. In addition, the Master addresses new starters highlighting the significance of the College one-to-one tutorial teaching model, the support required to maintain the student experience, and the importance of research and how it informs teaching. New academic staff are also invited to attend informal academic review meetings.

69   The annual faculty appraisal policy was reviewed during 2018-19 and subsequently revised with additional guidance documentation prepared. The Staff Handbook clearly sets out the approach for both permanent and sessional academic staff and the mechanism through which bespoke development and training needs can be captured. Annual appraisals are carried out by Heads of Faculty and can take into account a range of sources including peer review of teaching, examination paper peer review, and formal and informal student feedback, all of which will be collated, summarised, and discussed in annual appraisal meetings that are scheduled between May and July. The HR Manager maintains oversight of the process by attending each appraisal and subsequently uploading the appraisal forms to the HR portal. The annual appraisal process is concluded by the preparation of a Faculty Summary Report, which is considered by Academic Board in September. For new staff a probationary appraisal meeting must be held in the fifth teaching term of a permanent contract of employment. This appraisal is conducted by the Head of Faculty with the Master and again an HR representative in attendance. Academic staff are generally positive about the appraisal process.

70   The annual staff conference provides a two-day institutional-wide opportunity for all College staff to receive training and development on a range of issues from both internal and external speakers. Topics at the most recent event in September 2018 included academic integrity, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Prevent training, and disability awareness. Further discussion of staff development is given in paragraphs 94-95.

Staff with key programme management responsibilities have experience of curriculum development and assessment design

71   Curriculum development and assessment design are overseen by Heads of Faculty and led by Course Leaders, all of whose descriptions highlight programme and course development, approval, and course modification as key responsibilities. Examples of programme and course approval documentation available to the scrutiny team showed that Heads of Faculty and Course Leaders fulfilled these responsibilities appropriately and effectively. They are supported in these roles, and in curriculum development and assessment design, by the HQA and the Quality Manager. Clarity regarding these processes has been further provided through updates to the AQF. To inform future curriculum developments, Heads of Faculty receive feedback from a range of sources including other academic staff, students, and external examiners, and the Head of the LAUNCH programme.

Staff with key programme management responsibilities have engagement with the activities of providers of higher education in other organisations (through, for example, involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers)

72   Staffing profiles show a relatively low level of academic engagement by teaching staff with other higher education institutions. Seven currently hold external examiner appointments, and others have acted as external examiners for doctorates. Individual teaching staff, and the College, would benefit from further academic engagements of this kind.

D The environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes

> **Criterion D1**
>
> The teaching and learning infrastructure of an organisation granted taught degree awarding powers, including its student support and administrative support arrangements, is effective and monitored.

The effectiveness of learning and teaching activities is monitored in relation to stated academic objectives and intended learning outcomes

73   The College aims to provide an outstanding personalised higher education experience to all students. Its approach to teaching and learning, centred on the essay-based, one-to-one tutorial model, is set out in the Teaching and Learning Strategy 2019-24, a previous version of which was reviewed and revised by Academic Board in 2018-19 for implementation in the academic year 2019-20. Mechanisms used to monitor the quality of teaching and learning include observation of teaching, the annual staff appraisal process, and student feedback obtained through SSLC meetings, TLEC, Collegium, Faculty meetings, and Academic Board.

74   Heads of Faculty coordinate annual peer observations of teaching at the start of each term. The process is laid out in the Staff Handbook and supported by the annual Training and Development Programme. Observations have recently been expanded to include a short session with students to hear their feedback, with a member of the Quality Team acting as a neutral party. As peer reviewers, staff are encouraged to provide feedback, but also to use the process as a means to reflect upon their own teaching methods. Copies of completed staff observation forms are sent to the relevant Head of Faculty and the HR Department, where they are stored on the HR portal, along with reports of the completed reviews, including any action points and objectives for the coming year. These documents are reviewed by the HR and Operations Manager and discussed as part of each staff member's annual appraisal (paragraph 69).

75   Staff observation results are sometimes discussed at Faculty meetings, where teaching best practice and areas requiring improvement are considered. Outcomes of these discussions are then presented to TLEC. Overall, the College effectively manages, and routinely monitors, its delivery of learning and teaching.

Students are informed of the outcomes of assessments in a timely manner

76   Programme teams are responsible for ensuring that feedback is provided to students, either in hard copy or electronically. The College Undergraduate Assessment Policy requires that assessment feedback is given normally within 20 working days, though in some programmes this may vary depending on the nature of the assignments. Students who met the scrutiny team confirmed that assessment feedback return times are clearly stated in course guides, all deadlines are met, and they receive feedback within two to three weeks, on average. National Student Survey (NSS) results for 'Assessment and feedback' in 2017-18 were very positive: 89 per cent of NCH students said that 'Feedback on my work has been timely', compared with a sector average of 73 per cent. Results from the College's annual Student Survey (also known as the Super Survey) were also broadly positive in this regard.

Constructive and developmental feedback is given to students on their performance

77   Staff are provided with guidance on how to write assessment feedback and outcomes in the NCH Undergraduate Assessment Policy. Academic staff are encouraged to provide students with clear, focused and developmental comments on their work. Programme teams are responsible for ensuring that student marks are recorded accurately on the student record system, and that this is achieved by the date specified by the College Registrar. Students receive feedback through the student record system and by email, and can view their marks and developmental feedback on the VLE. Students told the scrutiny team that they usually received written feedback on coursework cover sheets, with care taken to highlight which areas of their work were acceptable, and constructive feedback regarding what they could do to improve their grade.

78   The effectiveness of assessment practice is routinely monitored using external examiners' reports, student feedback, annual programme monitoring, and assessment boards. In the NSS and the Student Survey a large majority of students agreed that their assessment feedback was helpful. Students who met the scrutiny team confirmed that they were satisfied with feedback on their assessed work. Some staff give monthly written feedback on several essays together.

79   Staff who met the scrutiny team also noted that the College's one-to-one tutorial system enables students to discuss an essay draft with a lecturer before they submit their work for formal submission and feedback. They also remarked that this formative feedback process allows them to consider comprehensively the content of an essay with the student and to ensure adequate understanding. Overall, assessment feedback is both timely and helpful.

Feedback from students, staff (and where relevant) employers and other institutional stakeholders is obtained and evaluated, and clear mechanisms exist to provide feedback to all such constituencies

80   The College actively engages with the student body and seeks to work with students as partners. It offers a range of representation opportunities for students to provide feedback, as described in the Academic Handbook and Programme Handbooks. Student representatives also sit as members of Academic Board, TLEC, Faculty meetings, the SSLC, Destinations Committee, and the NCH Diploma Team. Membership of the new NCHNL Board includes a student representative, and there are plans to elect one in the near future. Student representatives are supported in their role by the Quality Team. They may also be members of steering groups, working parties, focus groups and programme or course reviews and approval events, as appropriate. The student voice is also heard at the Annual Open Forum, where students, faculty and professional staff, are led by the Master in an afternoon session of discussion. Student representatives have opportunities to be involved in programme design and approval when proposals for new programmes and courses are presented to regular Faculty meetings.

81   SSLC meetings enable students to provide regular feedback and evaluation in order to enhance the student experience. Each subject cohort has an elected student representative who represents their peers at SSLC meetings and maintains a link between them and the College. Representatives are trained by the Quality Manager. At SSLC meetings students raise issues and provide staff with their views and opinions, while for staff this is an opportunity to update students on the progress of changes made in response to their feedback. The scrutiny team's observations of meetings found that student representatives were making active contributions in all meetings observed.

82   The College makes good use of internal and NSS results, and there are effective mechanisms for the collection, analysis and sharing of these, both with staff and students.

Reports on results of the NSS and Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) surveys are routinely presented to Academic Board. The scrutiny team found a range of evidence that student feedback is positively acted upon. Course surveys and annual student surveys also feed into annual programme monitoring reports. The 2017 internal student survey indicated that 91 per cent of students surveyed felt that the student voice was represented, and the 2018-19 NSS survey indicated 81 per cent satisfaction with the student voice.

83   In response to concerns that students may be facing survey fatigue, with estimations that students were expected to participate in between 15 and 23 surveys each year, the College set up a working party to review its approach to student surveys in 2017-18. The working party recommended that each student should receive a single link in June to complete the NCH Student Survey, which includes a full range of academic and student experience questions. However, response rates for the survey were low in 2017-18, with only around 30 per cent of eligible students in Year 1 and Year 2 completing it. During 2018-19 the Quality Team reviewed reasons for the low response rate and was considering a later implementation date to avoid the survey coinciding with end-of-year examinations.

84   Students are kept abreast of changes made as a result of their feedback formally through SSLC meetings, student representation on committees, and the Student Union, and informally through 'We're listening' posters displayed throughout the College. Students also receive an overview of how their feedback has been used to enhance the College in an annual Quality Assurance Induction Session at the start of each academic year. Students confirmed that they felt well represented within the College and their feedback was acted upon. As an example, they described how changes were made to the curriculum of one course after students reported that the workload level impacted on their attendance at other lectures. They recognised, however, that proposed changes could not always be made immediately.

85   Staff also have opportunities to provide feedback at the Academic Board, Faculty meetings, and Collegium. Although there is no staff equivalent to student feedback surveys, the first College Open Forum was held at the end of 2016-17 for students, faculty and professional staff to provide feedback to the College. Any identified areas for improvement were collated into the College action plan. However, the scrutiny team noted that there is no formal mechanism for staff to provide feedback to the College anonymously at present.

86   Some faculties have consulted with prospective employers about the design or implementation of their programmes. For example, on being approached by the Economics Network for an employability audit, the Head of the Economics Faculty mapped the skills identified by the audit to skills that students may need to develop. However, at present a minority of faculties have links to external bodies and prospective employers, and apart from visiting speakers, there is no formal process in place at College level to gain feedback from employers or industry representatives. Although the LAUNCH project aims to make NCH students more employable and attractive to employers, there has yet to be any formal opportunity for employer representatives to give feedback to the College on the progress of the LAUNCH programme, though the Dean of Careers, who heads the programme, relays informal employer feedback by attending Faculty meetings.

Students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, and account is taken of different students' needs

87   New undergraduate students receive a comprehensive induction at the start of their first year, with 'Welcome Back' refresher induction sessions at the start of each subsequent year. The induction sessions welcome students to the College, clearly outlining a broad range of College information, including the governance structure, student representation,

academic appeals and complaints, the NCH Academic Handbook, and the provision of student support. The Student and Academic Services (SAS) team leads induction, which includes contributions from the Facilities Manager, the Metropolitan Police, and Student Central (sports and social facilities information). All students are members of NCH Student Union (NCHSU) on enrolment and the SU undertakes a Freshers' Fair as part of the induction process. Students are invited to give feedback on their induction programme in the annual Student Survey. Overall, students were positive about their induction, and said that the process had given them an accurate overview of what to expect at the College.

Available learning support materials are adequate to support students in the achievement of the stated purposes of their study programmes

88   As space within its present premises is limited (paragraph 6), the College provides IT and library services for staff and students in partnership with the University of London Senate House Library. Under an arrangement governed by a Memorandum of Agreement, NCH has the use of a designated area of the Library. The Academic Operations Officer oversees and monitors library resources. Library resources are discussed at Faculty meetings and at TLEC, and budgeting is considered in the light of student requests. Collegium meetings also include facilities as a standing item, and academic staff can discuss library needs (such as journal subscriptions) with the Resource Allocation Group. Issues such as student non-payment of Library fines have been discussed and resolved at TLEC, with input from Senate House Library and student representatives.

89   The 2017-18 NSS found that 68 per cent (sector average 87 per cent) of students were satisfied with library resources, and 77 per cent (sector average 87 per cent) with course-specific resources. In response, the College has made plans to secure extra learning resources. For example, Academic Board has been exploring plans to expand remote access to the NU library and associated learning resources for NCH students. However, notwithstanding these issues with learning resources, students who met the scrutiny team reported that they were satisfied with the provision of learning materials and that the available library resources fulfilled their needs.

The effectiveness of any student and staff advisory and counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered

90   NCH outsources its counselling services for students and staff to an external provider, and these services are widely advertised in the College. It also has a screening procedure in place to assist with triaging students who do not have mental health support already in place. Students are helped to refer to NHS services, including specialists, if appropriate. Staff have received training, by external specialists, for mental health awareness. Guidance for staff is included in the Fitness to Study policy. The NCHNL Board has identified a need for greater support for visiting NU students, and has plans to recruit a dedicated pastoral and student support team for NU students, in addition to extra faculty support staff.

Administrative support systems are able to monitor student progression and performance accurately, and provide timely and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs

91   As part of its preparations for the possible grant of TDAP, the College is in the process of replacing its current student record system with a fully inclusive digital student information system (SIS), in order to fully cover the student journey. Extensive training on SIS was provided to staff on a faculty training day. However, progress in moving to the new SIS has proved to be slower than expected. The new system is already in use to track current student data, and historical student data is being transferred to it. Solent University's student records system is currently in use for assessment data and tracking, but if TDAP is

granted, all student data will be transferred to the new SIS, which will be in full use from academic year 2020-21 onwards. Following NU's acquisition of the College, the tracking of recruitment and admissions data may be upgraded to a system of data management used by NU.

92   The College has a good overview of recruitment, progression and achievement data, which is monitored using standard digital applications in addition to SIS. Admissions data is considered by the Executive Dean in a recruitment forecast, which is also used to update professional staff at fortnightly meetings. Progression data is circulated by the Registrar in a Student Progression Report, and is fed into subject progression spreadsheets, which are updated annually for the monitoring of progression patterns. Progression and achievement data is considered by the NCHNL Board and Academic Board. Attendance data is also reported, and students are asked to meet their Head of Faculty if their attendance falls below 70 per cent. DLHE data is monitored in a College report, with a commentary, which each Faculty reviews. The College has explained that should TDAP be granted, Annual Course Review and Annual Faculty Review will continue to ensure robust monitoring of student recruitment, retention, success and progression data.

Effective and confidential mechanisms are in place to deal with all complaints regarding academic and non-academic matters

93   The College has effective Complaints and Undergraduate Academic Appeals policies, which are provided to students in the NCH Academic Handbook and on the website. The Complaints Policy reflects the UK Quality Code; it assures students that all complaints made will be treated confidentially, fairly and seriously, and provides options for informal resolution. Students who met the scrutiny team were aware of how and where to access information regarding complaints and appeals. Refresher training on how to raise concerns, complain or make an academic appeal is provided at the start of the academic year. The Registrar oversees complaints and maintains a record of complaints outcomes in order to ensure that the College has taken appropriate action. An annual report on student complaints and outcomes is presented to the Academic Board and NCHNL Board. At the June 2019 Board meeting it was reported that no complaints had been referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

Staff involved with supporting the delivery of the organisation's higher education provision are given adequate opportunities for professional development

94   Academic Board updated and approved the Staff Training and Development Strategy and Staff Training and Development Programme in 2018. The Programme recognises that staff training needs have to be recognised and met in an ongoing process. Responsibility for training and development budgeting lies with the Academic Board, which draws up a budget in line with line managers' proposals, taking into account feedback from students and external examiners. In pursuit of its aim that all academic staff should have a teaching qualification or a fellowship of the HEA (paragraph 58), staff with senior HEA Fellowships support new colleagues with their applications, and developmental funds are made available for attendance at professional training activities. Academic and professional staff identify training needs through the annual appraisal process (paragraph 69).

95   Staff who met the scrutiny team described a number of opportunities for staff development, including management training. There are new opportunities for training and development with NU and its Centre for Advanced Teaching and Learning through Research (CATLR). The CATLR programme provides a wide range of opportunities for teaching staff to improve their practice and enhance student learning. The annual two-day staff training event in 2018 was observed to be well attended.

Information that the organisation produces concerning its higher education provision is accurate and complete

96   NCH's Public Information Policy indicates the aims, context, scope and subject matter of information published by NCH, and the specific types of College media used. The Public Information Policy was reviewed by the Executive Dean and Director of Marketing at the Policy and Compliance Committee in light of changes required by GDPR. Recruitment and marketing information is reviewed at the mid-cycle Academic Board review. Overall responsibility for the management of publicly available information such as the website, marketing and outreach, press relations, external communications, and student recruitment lies with the Director of Marketing. The Master is responsible for the final overview and approval of academic information while the Executive Dean is responsible for all other statements and information, such as advertisements and publications.

97   Information for prospective and current students, alumni and staff regarding NCH provision is provided on the College website and in the Prospectus. Students confirmed that information made available to them before the start of their programme was mostly accurate and helpful, though they noted one exception, where information about entry requirements for a programme was clarified in response to students' feedback.

Equal opportunities policies are in place and implemented effectively

98   The College takes steps to welcome students with differing support needs. Student welfare is underpinned by the Student Welfare Policy and led by the Student Wellbeing Coordinator (SWC), who is a student's first point of contact for welfare issues. Applicants with disabilities or additional learning needs are welcomed, in line with the College's Undergraduate Admissions Policy and Student Disability Policy. The College asks that applicants declare on their application if they have any disabilities so that appropriate support can be put in place. On enrolment, students complete the NCH Disclosure Form and submit to the SWC who will arrange a private meeting with the student to discuss any support needs. Students confirmed that they were satisfied with the student welfare and support provision offered by the College.

99   An Equal Opportunities Policy, Student Disability Policy, and Access and Participation Statement 2017-18 are all in place. Further disability-specific information is provided to students in the UG Student Handbook. The Staff Handbook and HR Strategy ensure that equal opportunities policies are made known effectively. A redrafted Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (to replace the Student Disability Policy) was considered at the June 2019 Academic Board.

100   The present NCH building raises accessibility issues (paragraph 6) which, because of its listed status, cannot be addressed. This situation is currently managed by offering students with a disability alternative accessible and/or adapted accommodation in nearby buildings. The College recognises a need for additional staff training for the support of students with additional learning needs or disability, and it has plans to broaden the staff conference with a greater workshop focus on special educational needs and awareness. Overall, however, the College's equal opportunities policies are implemented effectively.