



Higher Education Review: Wales of Neath Port Talbot College trading as the NPTC Group of Colleges

March 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review: Wales conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Neath Port Talbot College trading as the NPTC Group of Colleges. The review took place from 22 to 24 March 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Tessa Counsell
- Mr Millard Parkinson
- Mr Rhys Taylor (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review: Wales the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 7. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 10.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review: Wales](#)³ and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [Glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

³ Higher Education Review: Wales web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Higher-Education-Review-Wales.aspx.

Amended judgement - March 2017

Introduction

In March 2016 Neath Port Talbot College trading as the NPTC Group of Colleges (the College) underwent a Higher Education Review: Wales, which resulted in the following judgements: the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations meets UK expectations; the quality of student learning opportunities meets UK expectations; the quality of the information about learning opportunities meets UK expectations; and the enhancement of student learning opportunities requires improvement to meet UK expectations.

Negative judgements are subject to a formal follow-up by QAA, which involves the monitoring of an action plan produced by the College in response to the report's findings.

The College published an action plan in autumn 2016 describing how it intended to address the recommendations, affirmations and features of good practice identified in the review, and has been working over the last six months to demonstrate how it has implemented that plan.

The follow-up process included two progress updates and culminated in the review team's scrutiny of the College's progress reports and supporting documentary evidence, along with a one-day visit on 17 February 2017 with two reviewers. During the visit the review team met with senior staff, teaching staff and students to discuss progress and triangulate the evidence base received over the preceding months.

The visit confirmed that the College had successfully addressed recommendations relating to the enhancement of student learning opportunities, and that the good practice has been appropriately disseminated. The College also completed actions against recommendations, affirmations and features of good practice relating to: academic standards; quality of and information about higher education provision, which received positive judgements; and schedule. This contributed to the progress made against the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

QAA Board decision and amended judgement

The review team concluded that the College had made sufficient progress to recommend that the judgements relating to the enhancement of student learning opportunities be amended. The QAA Board accepted the team's recommendation and the judgement is now formally amended. The College's judgements are now as follows.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations **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.

The review can be considered to be signed off as complete.

Findings from the follow-up process

The review team found that the College had made progress against the recommendations as follows.

Recommendation: Establish a process to record systematically staff engagement with higher education-specific continuing professional development (CPD) and scholarly activity by July 2016 (Expectation B3).

Since the review, the College has implemented a Scholarly Activity Scheme, with a Staff Development Report presented to the Higher Education Quality and Enhancement Management Group (HEQEMG). It is taking steps to ensure that it considers higher education-specific CPD at staff annual appraisals, with staff encouraged to apply for a Higher Education Scholarly Activity project. The Staff Development Programme for 2016-17 offers higher education-specific CPD related to Higher Education Academy fellowships and higher education observations, alongside the cross-College training events. The appraisal process also evaluated staff development that has taken place and sets targets for the following year.

Recommendation: Take further steps to ensure the effectiveness of the College's internal moderation processes and make such processes clear for external examiners by July 2016 (Expectations B6, B7).

Following the review the College determined that all module second-marker/moderation forms must be presented to external examiners alongside samples of assessed work. Higher Education Coordinators would examine the effectiveness of internal moderation processes in discussion with external examiners and in programme monitoring reports presented to the HEQEMG. For most programmes these measures were implemented too late for the 2015-16 external examining process. The College provided examples of second-marking and internal moderation. Internal moderation is also examined as part of the teaching observation process, and as such senior tutors are monitoring the consistency and quality of internal moderation. This is further overseen and monitored by the Assistant Principal for Quality.

Recommendation: Ensure that all additional course costs are clearly indicated in all appropriate publications by July 2016 (Expectation C).

The College has amended course profiles to include details of any additional costs that students will incur on the programme. The review team found the information full and accurate; students confirmed that they are satisfied with the information on costs. In addition, the College noted a revised approval process for information, which would ensure the ongoing provision of information on costs of study.

Recommendation: Strengthen mechanisms for the central oversight and monitoring of the accuracy and timeliness of all published information by July 2016 (Expectation C).

The College now has an approval process for all information, which includes an Approval of Higher Education Information Flowchart and a calendar for the production of higher education information. Responsibility for approving information rests with the Assistant Principal for Higher Education, who provides central oversight. The Calendar of Higher Education Information enables the timely provision of published information.

Recommendation: Take steps to develop existing networks to facilitate employer input to the design and approval of programmes by September 2016 (Expectations B1, A3.4).

The College's Employer Engagement Strategy informs its approach to employer input into the design of programmes, which is now a mandatory requirement of the higher education curriculum development process. The College now involves employers in programmes in preparation for revalidation and approval events. Programmes continue to benefit from close links with employers in construction and engineering, where many students are sponsored.

Recommendation: Provide an annual consolidated summary of the strengths and areas for improvement identified from all external examiner reports by September 2016 (Expectation B7).

The College has developed an External Examiner Overview Report template, which it used for the first time when presented to the HEQEMG in October 2016. The overview report summarises the standard and consistency of marking and moderation, good practice and areas for improvement. Senior staff confirmed that they had found the process of compiling the report useful for identifying recommendations and good practice, which it will disseminate through CPD events.

Recommendation: Ensure that all employers are provided with appropriate information on course content and students' progress by September 2016 (Expectation B10).

The College has worked to ensure that it gives programme and module information at the commencement of study to employers providing work placements or sponsoring students. Higher Education Coordinators ensure that employers receive the necessary information. In addition, the College has devised a draft progress report template (for use mid and end of year) but is intending to use an online programme in the future. The College is consulting with employers on the presentation of the information they require and intends to share students' mid-year progress reports with their employers at the beginning of March.

Recommendation: Working with the awarding body, embed work-based learning in appropriate modules to adhere to the requirements of the Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark by January 2017 (Expectation A1).

Following the original review the College has undertaken a review of the work-based learning elements of the Foundation Degrees in International Tourism and Events Management, Hospitality and Catering Management, and Music (Performance and Production) in order to ensure adherence to the requirements of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*. The review has involved students, employers, and the relevant awarding bodies for programme revalidation events in 2017. Teaching staff confirmed that the programme teams are designing learning outcomes that reflect real-world professional experience and have redesigned modules with the intention of incorporating more work-based learning outcomes.

Recommendation: Ensure more comprehensive oversight by the College's Senior Management Team of the awarding bodies' programme monitoring and review reports by January 2017 (Expectations B8, A3.3).

The College has established the HEQEMG, which is chaired by the Vice Principal and includes Assistant Principals, Heads of School and student representatives in its membership. Reports from the HEQEMG are now standard agenda items at Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings. The College has processes in place for the senior management oversight of awarding body programme annual monitoring reports through

the inclusion of four members of the Senior Management Team in the membership of the HEQEMG. However, these members only make up a small proportion of the SMT. The minutes of the HEQEMG do not include examination of, or responses to, reports, as they had not yet been received (the HEQEMG being newly established). The HEQEMG did, however, receive school self-evaluation reports. The Higher Education Quality and Enhancement Strategy Group (HEQESG) also reports to the SMT, but minutes do not refer to programme annual monitoring reports. Minutes of SMT meetings provided did not show oversight of awarding bodies' annual monitoring reports. The review team concludes that the College needs to continue making progress against this recommendation.

Recommendation: Develop formal processes for selecting and training student representatives and monitoring the effectiveness of the arrangements by January 2017 (Expectation B5).

The College's website outlines the actions that the College takes to ensure student representation and representation of the Student Voice. This includes an online feedback system, module reviews, annual programme review, the Staff-Student Consultative Committee and the Higher Education Student Parliament. The College now enrolls and trains student representatives and informs them of upcoming meetings and events. In October 2016 the Learner Voice Action Group became the Student Involvement Working Group, including two higher education student representatives, with the intention that students would lead the Group by September 2017. The College also held Student Representative Campus Senedd meetings in October and November 2016, which are scheduled for once per term at each College campus, with all student representatives invited to attend. The College will monitor the impact of its Student Involvement Strategy using student feedback, including from a student conference, provided to the HEQEMG and then to the SMT.

Recommendation: Working with the awarding bodies, consider how external examiners' reports for awards offered across a number of providers can be disaggregated to indicate the partner responsible for delivery by January 2017 (Expectation B7).

Following the original review, the Assistant Principal for Higher Education has worked with the awarding bodies to review the template used for external examiner reports. External examiner reports show improvements in fully identifying the relevant delivery institution, and have made specific points relating to each partner institution.

Recommendation: Develop a strategic approach to enhancement and ensure that enhancement initiatives are identified and implemented in a planned manner across the College by January 2017 (Enhancement).

In response to the recommendation, the College established the HEQEMG, reporting to the SMT and meeting termly, to have strategic oversight and responsibility for the implementation of enhancement across the College. The first meeting of the HEQEMG agreed a College definition of enhancement, and subsequently identified a number of actions on the Higher Education Quality Development Plan and Enhancement Projects with themes, as identified in the 2016-21 Higher Education Strategy. The College developed an Enhancement flow chart, which indicates the process of considering Enhancement projects and preparing proposals for approval by the HEQEMG and SMT. The enhancement projects clearly articulate plans for enhancement, with clear timescales of responsibilities for completion. The College was able to provide a number of examples of the impact and evaluation of these projects to date, demonstrating a robust enhancement system that draws on raw data and feedback from students.

Affirmation: The development of a Learner Information for Tutors (LIFT) system, which brings together all student information and enables effective support throughout the duration of study (Expectations B2, B4).

The College purchased new software that imports information from UCAS directly into EBS, this functionality replacing the pastoral and student support elements of LIFT. This development contributes to the enhancements listed in the Enhancement Project: Admissions. Students can also use the software to see their learning plans and timetables.

Affirmation: The progress being made to define and develop student representation and the steps being taken to embed student representation at all levels (Expectation B5).

Following the review visit, the College undertook to implement the Student Involvement Strategy in full. Work is underway on all four strands and progress is reported to the Student Management Group and the Standards and Performance Management Group. All programmes have student representatives, the majority of whom have received training. They complement the extensive measures in place at the College to obtain student feedback.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Neath Port Talbot College t/a the NPTC Group of Colleges

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations **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 **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

Good practice

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

- The multiple mechanisms to support students, particularly those from non-traditional higher education backgrounds in areas of deprivation, to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

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

By July 2016:

- establish a process to record systematically staff engagement with higher education-specific continuing professional development (CPD) and scholarly activity (Expectation B3)
- take further steps to ensure the effectiveness of the College's internal moderation processes and make such processes clear for external examiners (Expectations B6, B7)
- ensure that all additional course costs are clearly indicated in all appropriate publications (Expectation C)
- strengthen mechanisms for the central oversight and monitoring of the accuracy and timeliness of all published information (Expectation C).

By September 2016:

- take steps to develop existing networks to facilitate employer input to the design and approval of programmes (Expectations B1, A3.4)
- provide an annual consolidated summary of the strengths and areas for improvement identified from all external examiner reports (Expectation B7)
- ensure that all employers are provided with appropriate information on course content and students' progress (Expectation B10).

By January 2017:

- working with the awarding body, embed work-based learning in appropriate modules to adhere to the requirements of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* (Expectation A1)
- ensure more comprehensive oversight by the College's Senior Management Team of the awarding bodies' programme monitoring and review reports (Expectations B8, A3.3)
- develop formal processes for selecting and training student representatives and monitoring the effectiveness of the arrangements (Expectation B5)
- working with the awarding bodies, consider how external examiners' reports for awards offered across a number of providers can be disaggregated to indicate the partner responsible for delivery (Expectation B7)
- develop a strategic approach to enhancement and ensure that enhancement initiatives are identified and implemented in a planned manner across the College (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Neath Port Talbot College t/a the NPTC Group of Colleges is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The development of a Learner Information for Tutors (LIFT) system, which brings together all student information and enables effective support throughout the duration of study (Expectations B2, B4).
- The progress being made to define and develop student representation and the steps being taken to embed student representation at all levels (Expectation B5).

About Neath Port Talbot College t/a the NPTC Group of Colleges

The NPTC Group of Colleges (the College) came into existence on 1 August 2013, as a result of the merger of Neath Port Talbot College and Coleg Powys, and was previously known as Neath Port Talbot College. It is one of the largest groups of colleges and education providers in Wales in terms of student numbers and has an annual turnover of circa £55 million. The College offers postgraduate and professional certificates in education, foundation and bachelor's degrees, Higher National Diplomas and Certificates and Diplomas and Certificates of Higher Education, and the higher education curriculum sits across 10 academic schools. Two hundred and eighty-eight full-time students and 133 part-time students are currently registered on higher education programmes.

The College covers over one third of the land mass of Wales and operates from four large main centres: Afan Campus, Brecon Beacons Campus, Neath Campus and Newtown Campus. The College also has smaller centres, including Pontardawe Campus, Maesteg Campus, Queen Street Campus, Swansea Campus, Llandrindod Wells Campus and a state-of-the-art Sports Academy in Llandarcy Park. The College owns a number of subsidiary companies operating at various venues in Swansea, Llandarcy and Llanelli, and runs an international language school in Hampshire (LSI Portsmouth).

The College's mission statement is 'to be an outstanding education and training provider' and it also uses the strapline, 'More than just an education'. The College prides itself on providing a variety of extracurricular activities including sports, clubs, music and dance as well as education and training in vocationally based subjects. It serves a number of areas of social and economic deprivation and considerable emphasis is placed on wider participation

in education, on work-based learning and partnerships, and on encouraging progression from further education into higher education. It sees its mission in the area as including helping to tackle poverty by improving economic prosperity, and it is taking steps to promote Welsh-medium and bilingual learning. The College delivers a wide range of bespoke training for industry via its commercial arm, Trainingwales.com. The College is also the lead provider and contract holder in Skills Academy Wales, a partnership of eight training providers who deliver between them a £12 million work-based learning contract.

The College works with five external higher education providers: Pearson (HNC and HND programmes in Building, and Computing and Systems Development) and four university partners: Glyndŵr University (a Foundation Degree in Rural Business and BA (Hons) programmes in Business Management and IT, and English and History), University of South Wales (BA/BSc (Hons) top-up degrees in Business Studies and Childhood Studies, CertHE in Substance Misuse and Vulnerable Adults, DipHE in Public Health, Foundation Degrees in Business Studies, Childhood Studies, Dental Nursing and Sports Coaching and Development, HNDs in Business Studies and the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education), Swansea University (Foundation Degrees in Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering) and University of Wales Trinity St David (Foundation Degrees, BA (Hons) top-up degrees, HNDs and HNCs in Hotel Management and International Tourism and Event Management, and Foundation Degrees in Music (Performance and Production) and Care Studies). These partnerships and all aspects of higher education delivery are managed and monitored by the Higher Education Management Group (HEMG).

Explanation of the findings about Neath Port Talbot College trading as the NPTC Group of Colleges

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College is not a degree-awarding body, but delivers 30 higher education programmes with four awarding universities, University of Wales Trinity St David, University of South Wales, Glyndŵr University and Swansea University, together with four HNC/D programmes awarded by Pearson.

1.2 The Responsibilities Checklists outline the College's responsibilities in reference to maintaining the academic standards of the awards. While the awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for setting the academic standards of the awards, and have overall responsibility for the maintenance of those standards, the College is responsible for delivering and assessing the programmes of study, and for maintaining the academic standards of the degree-awarding bodies and organisation, as set out in the Responsibilities Checklists and Memoranda of Agreement.

1.3 The programmes lead to the following awards on *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ): Postgraduate Certificate in Education, bachelor's degrees with honours, Professional Certificate in Education, foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas, Diplomas of Higher Education,

Higher National Certificates and Certificates of Higher Education, and the evidence provided by the College indicates that the Expectation would be met.

1.4 The team tested the Expectation by means of further scrutiny of documentation, including awarding university documentation, programme specifications, external examiner reports and responses, programme documentation and minutes of meetings of the Higher Education Management Group, the Quality Strategy Group, Higher Education Coordinators Group and the Learning and Performance Group. The team also met senior, academic and support staff, and students.

1.5 The FHEQ is used as a reference point for all higher education programmes at the College, as per the approval processes of the awarding bodies for validated provision, and in the College internal process alongside the Pearson process for the provision awarded by that organisation. Programme specifications for the awarding body-approved programmes include reference to Subject Benchmark Statements, and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark/Characteristics* where appropriate.

1.6 The College's Higher Education Strategic Plan 2013-16 supports the overall NPTC Strategic Plan 2011-2015, currently under review. The Higher Education Strategic Plan is detailed and delineates the alignment of the College's direction for its higher education provision, both within the internal (College) and external (Wales) environment. Specifically, partnerships, existing and new, are seen by the College as important to the development of higher education, alongside the development of flexible programmes, in particular foundation degrees and higher apprenticeships, and exploring international opportunities.

1.7 The Assistant Principal for Higher Education is responsible for the strategic management of higher education across the College. HEMG has oversight of higher education performance, considers student feedback and reviews and develops higher education across the College. Outcomes of the HEMG meetings feed into the Curriculum and Quality Group, thence to the Learning and Performance Management Group and the Senior Management Team (SMT), with appropriate notifications going to the Learning and Performance meeting of the Governing Body.

1.8 The university awarding bodies are responsible for the validation of the programmes they award, and their own processes are used to ensure that academic standards for the qualifications are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations. All new programmes are aligned with the relevant qualification framework through the validation process of the degree-awarding body outlined in the partnership agreements and validation documents, and qualification descriptions and Subject Benchmark Statements are embedded in the degree-awarding body's programme specifications in programme handbooks. Revalidation and reapproval processes ensure maintenance of standards, supported by annual monitoring of the College by the university awarding bodies. For Pearson programmes, standards are aligned to the National Occupational Standards through selection of units adhering to the rules of combination. Programme specifications for the Pearson programmes indicate the external reference points consulted in the design process, including the FHEQ, the Quality Code and the Welsh Qualifications Framework.

1.9 For foundation degrees offered by the College, the College generally takes into account the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*, with work-based learning and the linkage of theory to practice established at validation and noted in programme specifications in the validation documents. However, the Foundation Degree in Music Performance and Production was validated in 2012, in partnership with University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD), without a work-based learning element, which was stated as 'not viable for this qualification', with the student placement list for 2015-16 indicating that live briefs from

industry contacts would be used in lieu of a work placement. Programme-level learning outcomes, while not referencing work-based learning specifically, do contain opportunities for achievement in a workplace environment. The validation document states that 'the work-based learning element of the foundation degree is most prominent in the Community Music and Music Business modules, and this is evident in the module descriptors'. While the module learning outcomes for those modules do include those which lend themselves to learning and assessment by reference to the workplace, the assessment briefs seen by the team do not require that to be part of the programme, the exception being one assignment, with a 70 per cent weighting, in the Level 5 Community Music module. The review team **recommends** that the College, working with the awarding body, embeds work-based learning in appropriate modules to adhere to the requirements of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark*.

1.10 In conclusion, the review team found that the processes in place are effective in managing the College's responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards, with only the completion of activity already in place elsewhere regarding work-based learning on one foundation degree required. Therefore this Expectation is met, with low risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.11 While the awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for the academic standards of their awards, the College is responsible for the delivery and assessment of modules and programmes and for maintaining those academic standards through its academic frameworks.

1.12 The awarding universities have established processes for the approval and reapproval of the higher education programmes at the College, which ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification, and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations. The College's contribution to the maintenance of academic standards is laid out in the Memoranda of Agreement with the awarding universities and the Responsibilities Checklists. The agreements with the awarding bodies set out clearly the responsibilities of each partner and state that the College is responsible for all delivery and assessment on the agreed, validated programmes, while the universities are responsible for the appointment of external examiners and assessment boards. The Responsibility Checklist for the Pearson programmes is standard, with responsibility for academic frameworks and arrangements, apart from the initial programme design and Ofqual approval, resting with the College.

1.13 To exercise its responsibilities the College works with the academic regulations of the partner awarding universities for all provision under their agreements. These regulations, or links to them, are clearly laid out for staff and students in programme handbooks. For the Pearson programmes, reference is made to the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4-7 as 'governing the regulations around assessment', and detail is given on academic misconduct, extenuating circumstances and appeals, with further information available on the virtual learning environment (VLE). The Higher Education Management Group, chaired by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education, is responsible for the performance of all higher education programmes at the College, and for effective communication on all higher education issues. HEMG reports to the Learning Performance Management Group and SMT. The evidence provided by the College in the self-evaluation documentation and in further documentation would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.14 The review team tested the Expectation by further scrutiny of documentation, including awarding body programme validation documentation and approval meeting minutes, university and Pearson annual monitoring reports, the internal College approval process for Pearson programmes, the College Academic Misconduct Policy, the Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance, Academic Appeals, Staff Malpractice, Conflict of Interest, Recognition of Prior Learning and Extenuating Circumstances, Assessment Board guidelines and external examiner reports, responses and action plans. The team also met senior and academic staff and students during the visits.

1.15 The College works with four awarding bodies together with an awarding organisation. The review team found evidence that it is managed effectively by means of the College's own processes and clear guidance for staff, for example in the NPTC Group Assessment Guidelines for Higher Education and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. Senior and academic staff were able to demonstrate the robust nature of the

processes in place, with a clear distinction made between each awarding university's programmes and the staff who coordinate the delivery, with set teams working with each university's Link Officer. Clear and detailed information regarding each programme and awarding body is available to staff and students on the College's VLE, with appropriate links to, for example, academic regulations.

1.16 The College ensures that its assessment system is robust and adheres to the awarding bodies' and organisation's requirements through clear assessment documentation. For university-awarded provision, assessments are set and approved by the university through the external examiners' system, and Subject, Progression and Award Boards confirm marks for university provision verified through an internal moderation process. Information regarding the programme's learning outcomes and assessments is published online for current and prospective students, and a standardisation process is in place for Pearson programmes. The College's Assessment Board Guidelines and terms of reference adhere to the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment 2015-16, and 2015 Assessment Boards for awarding body and Pearson programmes adhered to the respective requirements.

1.17 The review team found that the processes laid down by the awarding bodies for setting standards for the franchised foundation degrees are adhered to by the College and confirmed by external examiner reports. In addition, the academic frameworks in place to ensure academic standards on the Pearson programmes are similarly effective. Therefore the team found that this Expectation is met, with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.18 The College's university awarding bodies compile and maintain the definitive programme documents for their provision at the College, with the responsibilities set out in the Memoranda of Agreement and the Responsibilities Checklists. The Responsibilities Checklist for the Pearson provision states that the College is responsible for 'providing definitive programme information relating to the Higher Nationals as delivered at their institution, including a tailored programme specification' and this is adhered to.

1.19 The College is also responsible for ensuring that the definitive document for each programme is made available to staff and students, to inform delivery and assessment. This is done through programme handbooks, which are available in hard copy and on the College VLE, and students are directed to them as part of their induction at the start of the programme. The evidence provided by the College in the self-evaluation documentation, together with further evidence, enables this Expectation to be met in its design.

1.20 The team tested the Expectation by scrutinising documentation provided by the College, including all programme specifications, example assessment briefs and module guides, Assessment Board minutes, external examiner reports, and awarding body and organisation annual monitoring reports, and assessed the effective dissemination of programme-definitive documentation in meetings with staff and students.

1.21 The definitive documents include programme-level learning outcomes, with those at module/unit level articulated in module guides. For the university-awarded programmes, learning outcomes at programme and module level are articulated in the programme specifications, available in programme handbooks and on the relevant university website. For the Pearson programmes the College has contextualised programme specifications, which outline programme-level outcomes as higher-level skills, with the unit outcomes specified by the awarding organisation.

1.22 Assessment Boards are held at each awarding university, and at the College for the Pearson programmes, to ensure that modules have been delivered in accordance with approved module descriptors.

1.23 The Assistant Principal for Higher Education completes an annual monitoring report for each awarding body and an internal report for the HEMG. These outline resource enhancements, periodic review of programmes and approval of new programmes, quality assurance and enhancement activities, and a review of external examiner reports. The annual monitoring process also includes an annual self-assessment report specifically for higher education provision and reports activity against key areas for development to ensure that standards are monitored and maintained.

1.24 Programme-definitive documentation provides a basis for monitoring and review of programmes, including awarding body annual monitoring and partner university and Pearson overview reports.

1.25 Programme and unit or module learning outcomes, as laid out in the programme specifications, form the basis for assessment and thence the progression and achievement of students, and the provision of records of study. The process of assessment of learning outcomes is scrutinised by external examiners and verified at Assessment Boards (see also Expectations B6 and B7).

1.26 The review team found that the processes in place for the provision and maintenance of programme-definitive documentation at the College form a sound basis for the delivery and assessment of programmes, and that therefore this Expectation is met, with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.27 The College delivers programmes franchised from four Welsh universities, and Higher National programmes from Pearson. Responsibilities for these programmes are identified in Memoranda of Agreement with the awarding bodies. Specific responsibilities are identified in Responsibility Checklists for each awarding body and the awarding organisation, which clearly state that responsibility for the design of programmes and alignment to UK threshold standards lies with awarding bodies and Pearson respectively. Awarding bodies hold responsibility for the setting and verification of standards to UK thresholds, the FHEQ and their individual regulations standards.

1.28 Programme teams have some involvement in programme design. For example, modules on the BSc Computing and Information Systems top-up programme were chosen from those offered by the awarding body, UWTSD, to suit the specific needs of NPTC students, and units on the HND Computing Systems Development were chosen from those offered by Pearson to provide a coherent progression to the BSc top-up. A new module was devised and validated for the FdSc Sports Coaching and Development programme as a result of feedback from students. On other programmes, teams have been involved in the development of modules.

1.29 Programme specifications are produced by awarding bodies for their awards delivered at the College. It is the responsibility of awarding bodies to ensure that they comply with UK threshold standards and the FHEQ and are informed by appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements. The College produces programme specifications for Pearson programmes from information provided by them.

1.30 The setting of assessment is the responsibility of awarding bodies as indicated in the Responsibilities Checklist, but programme teams are involved the design of assessment tasks to ensure variation of assessment and appropriateness of assessment to NPTC students.

1.31 Programmes leading to awards from partner universities are subject to periodic review in line with their regulations and Memoranda of Agreement. A number of successful validations and validation reviews took place in the previous academic year. The College was subject to a successful Institutional Reapproval event by the University of South Wales (USW) in 2014 and by UWTSD in 2015.

1.32 The College states that the FHEQ is used as a reference point in the design and review of all higher education programmes at the College. The allocation of new programmes and modules to the appropriate level of the FHEQ is considered and formally approved by the awarding body at validation. For all programmes approved/validated by awarding universities, qualification descriptors, reference to subject benchmarks and learning outcomes are embedded within the programme specifications, available in the programme handbooks. Foundation degrees are developed and delivered in accordance with the *Foundation Degree Qualification Characteristics*. For the Pearson programmes, the College ensures that the selection of units aligns with the rules of combination.

1.33 There is a process for internal approval of programmes prior to submission to awarding bodies for validation. This process includes production of a rationale based on student needs, progression opportunities, local skills needs and labour market information, which are considered along with learning and staff resource requirements. The choice of which awarding body to submit to for validation is based on that university's expertise in the subject area. The College has Centre Approval from Pearson to deliver programmes in several subject areas, which allows them to register new Higher National programmes with Pearson following the internal approval process.

1.34 The College Higher Education New Programme Proposal Form is completed by the course development team, which, together with proposal documents, is appraised by HEMG, and, if successful, goes to the Curriculum Strategy Group for discussion of the academic and business case for the new programme, prior to submission to the approval processes of the relevant university.

1.35 The review team examined evidence of programme specifications and information in programme handbooks. Evidence was provided of the complete process of considering new programmes through the College internal approval process and of successful validation and revalidation events. This was confirmed by representatives of awarding bodies in meetings. Scrutiny of relevant committee meetings, including the HEMG and Curriculum Strategy Group, confirmed that processes had been followed. Successful validation and revalidation events confirm the effectiveness of the internal approval process. Students expressed satisfaction with the appropriateness of the programmes to their needs.

1.36 Examination of the processes of the College and awarding bodies led the team to conclude that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.37 The learning outcomes and assessment of each programme are the responsibility of the degree-awarding bodies, while the College has responsibility for the development of programmes and setting assessments for Pearson awards, as outlined in the Responsibility Checklist.

1.38 The College makes use of internal and external Assessment Guidelines for setting higher education assessments for Pearson awards, and makes use of external benchmarks to ensure that assessments are set at the correct level. Assessment boards are held to confirm achievement of learning outcomes and that academic standards have been satisfied, and external examiners have noted that Assessment Boards are conducted effectively and regulations are adhered to.

1.39 The learning outcomes of each programme are outlined to staff and students in programme handbooks (see also Expectation A2.2), and clearly outline to students the expectations and criteria of the programme. Assessment design includes mapping of learning outcomes and internal verification, and external examiners are appointed for all programmes, by the awarding bodies and organisation, to ensure that all learning outcomes are met through assessment.

1.40 The College is responsible for the first marking and moderation of UWTSD and Swansea University programmes; however, USW and Glyndŵr are responsible for first marking and moderation of their validated programmes. External examiners are also provided with documentation outlining moderation of assessed work to demonstrate the assessment process and to ensure academic standards, and that students are meeting the intended learning outcomes (ILOs).

1.41 External examiner reports confirm that the learning outcomes and levels of achievement attained by students are consistent with those at other institutions, and reports also confirm that assessments are set at the correct level to measure student attainment and learning outcomes.

1.42 The review team tested the College's response by scrutinising all programme specifications, example assessment briefs and internal verification records, together with external examiner reports and assessment board minutes. The review team also met a range of staff at the College.

1.43 The College has processes in place to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded on the basis of achieved learning outcomes and that these meet the agreed standards in the programme specification. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.44 Monitoring and review of programmes at the College is based on annual monitoring; for university-awarded programmes this is based on the processes in place at the universities themselves, with a College-devised process for the Pearson programmes. Annual monitoring at programme level includes student data, module review information, student feedback and external examiner reports.

1.45 Higher education programmes delivered by the College are franchised from awarding universities and Pearson and are subject to their regulations for monitoring and review of programmes. Each higher education programme submits annual monitoring reports to the relevant awarding body regulations and deadlines. Pearson Higher National programmes have a College-devised annual monitoring report. Annual monitoring reports are examined by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and HEMG prior to submission to awarding universities. The examples of HEMG minutes provided do not include examination of annual monitoring reports but higher education reports are also submitted to HEMG for consideration. These monitoring reports inform the College overall self-assessment report (SAR), which includes a separate higher education section. This indicates examples of good practice and areas for improvement, although it does not make reference to those identified in individual programmes.

1.46 Glyndŵr University, USW and UWTSD produce Annual Partner Overview Reports. UWTSD undertook a Partnership Review and produced a report. This is part of the University procedure, and examined the partnership following the inclusion in UWTSD of Swansea Metropolitan University, with whom the College had a previous partnership that validated a number of awards.

1.47 Periodic review is undertaken by the awarding bodies, and may lead to a reapproval process. USW undertook an Institutional Reapproval in 2014 to approve continuation of approval for the NPTC Group to deliver its awards. The report conclusion indicates approval for a further five years. This report included reference to the delivery of PGCE provision at Coleg Powys prior to the merger.

1.48 The process for oversight of academic standards and response to issues is unclear and needs to be examined by SMT. Programme annual monitoring reports, annual monitoring reports from Pearson and overview monitoring reports by awarding universities are considered by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education, but processes are in place for oversight of these by SMT, which has access to all reports. This would enable the process to be met. The evidence provided does not confirm that reports are considered by HEMG or any other senior management body. There appear to be issues around recruitment, retention and achievement on some programmes, particularly Higher Nationals, which are not fully addressed in annual monitoring reports or considered by HEMG.

1.49 The team examined annual monitoring reports, partner overview reports and the USW reapproval report. The examples of HEMG reports were also examined and the

process was discussed at meetings with senior staff and representatives of two awarding bodies. HE reports are also considered by this process.

1.50 The review team recommends (see Expectation B8) that the College further develops and rigorously applies its existing mechanisms to provide more detailed oversight by the College's SMT of the monitoring and review of programmes by the relevant awarding bodies, but concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

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

Findings

1.51 The College includes staff from the College and the appropriate degree-awarding body in the validation and revalidation of its provision, including reporting to HEMG and Curriculum Strategy Group. Proposals for new provision require completion of an internal process, which includes consideration of the resource implications of delivering the provision, ensuring that the programme is viable. To develop new provision that has been identified, the College provides a Curriculum Development Fund, which asks staff to consider the aims, rationale, activities, timescales, and sustainability of the programme once funding ceases. This process is completed and approved prior to the submission of proposals to awarding bodies for validation.

1.52 External advisers are involved in the development of programmes awarded by the College's partner universities; however, there appears to be a lack of externality in the College's internal process, which approves the development of new Pearson programmes, despite a willingness from employers to engage in programme design. The review team **recommends** (see Expectation B1) that the College takes steps to develop existing networks to facilitate employer input to the design and approval of programmes.

1.53 The validation process includes consideration of the rationale, resources, staff development and contingency plan for programmes where students' employment may be at risk.

1.54 Once internal approval is secured, the awarding body's validation procedures are followed. A range of stakeholders across both the College and the awarding body are included in the process of developing a programme, such as Marketing and Student Support. Student feedback is used to inform the development of new provision, for example the development of the Strength and Conditioning unit as part of the FD Sports Coaching and Performance.

1.55 For revalidation events external members from the College's awarding bodies form a part of the revalidation panel, which also includes student representatives.

1.56 The review team considered the documentary evidence in advance of the review visit and requested additional documentary evidence during the review. The review team met a range of College staff, awarding body staff, employers and students at the visit.

1.57 The review team met students during the visit and they appeared willing and able to engage in providing feedback and with validation and revalidation processes; however, this engagement appeared to be informal and lacked training or guidance from the College.

1.58 There is some evidence of the consideration of threshold standards, Subject Benchmark Statements, the FHEQ, and the awarding body's standards and regulations. This includes consideration of professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements,

for example in FD Care Studies. Some of the academic staff the review team met were less familiar with the use of the *Foundation Degree Qualification Characteristics* and Quality Code in the approval of new programmes.

1.59 The review team considers that the College has adequate procedures and well-evidenced processes that confirm independent external expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards for awards provided by its awarding bodies. However, processes for internal approval require the College to develop employer input to the design and approval of Pearson-awarded programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.60 On reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.61 All seven Expectations in this area are met; the review team judged the risk to be low in six of the Expectations. The risk is judged by the team to be moderate in Expectation A3.3 (processes for monitoring and review). While the team saw evidence that the university partners have their own monitoring and review systems in place, it recommends (see Expectation B8) that the College should develop, in association with its awarding bodies, mechanisms for more detailed oversight by the College of the partners' monitoring and review processes, so that it has an ongoing overview across the whole of its higher education provision. The review team also recommends (see Expectation B1) that the College takes steps to develop existing networks to facilitate employer input to the design and approval of programmes.

1.62 The review team concludes that, overall, the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval

Findings

2.1 The College has no responsibility for the design of higher education programmes; all are franchised from awarding organisations and Pearson. Proposals for new programmes are made through completion of a Higher Education New Programme Proposal Form by programme teams and the relevant Head of School, which identifies the rationale for the programme, market needs, alignment to College strategic aims, resource implications and viability. The proposal is then examined by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and submitted to the HEMG for internal approval, with monitoring by the Curriculum Strategy Group before submission to the relevant awarding body for validation and approval. In 2014-15, two BA programmes underwent Collaborative Delivery Review and Reapproval. A number of foundation degrees and Higher National programmes were also validated. Each report included a number of recommendations, which have been acted upon. Minor modifications can be made to programmes with the approval of awarding bodies.

2.2 The team scrutinised minutes of the HEMG and the Curriculum Strategy Group where new programme proposals were discussed, together with the minutes from recent awarding body approval meetings, and engaged in discussion with staff involved in approvals and reapprovals.

2.3 There is student involvement in the validation and review process through focus groups, which consider development of and amendments to programmes and student inclusion on validation panels.

2.4 Programmes are usually reviewed and revalidated by awarding universities every five years in line with their academic regulations. There is no indication of employer involvement in the design or development of programmes. Discussions with employers indicated that they would be interested in such involvement. The team **recommends** that the College takes steps to develop existing networks to facilitate employer input to the design and approval of programmes (see also Expectation A3.4).

2.5 Annual monitoring reports are completed for each programme in which the performance of new programmes can be assessed.

2.6 The College 2013-16 Higher Education Strategic Plan states that the College is committed to ensuring 'the provision of a higher education offer that reflects local priorities and the economic aspirations and priorities of Wales and is accessible to individuals, employers and the communities within the region'. The development of partnerships with university awarding bodies enables the College to design and deliver suitable higher education opportunities to fit with the strategic aims.

2.7 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission*

Findings

2.8 The Responsibilities Checklist for each awarding body outlines the responsibilities of the College, including its responsibility for student recruitment and admissions. NPTG has responsibility for recruitment and admissions for USW, Glyndŵr University, UWTSD and Pearson. NPTG does not manage recruitment and admissions to franchised programmes by Swansea University. Admissions to franchised university programmes follow the University's own regulations and policies.

2.9 The College's strapline is 'Degrees on your Doorstep' and it is committed to providing vocational pathways to HE study, widening participation and access, and flexible and accessible learning for learners and employers, which reflects the needs and priorities of local communities and the local economy. It is clear from the evidence provided to the review team and the discussions with staff and students during the review team's visit that this vision is embedded in the College's activity and provision.

2.10 The College has an Admissions Policy that outlines the processes and policies in place to support applicants, including the information it will make available to applicants and parents, guardians and carers.

2.11 Responsibility for the policy lies with the Assistant Principal for Student Support and Inclusion. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the policy rests with the Student Strategy Group and the Learning and Performance Management Group (LPMG). The policy also outlines the adjustments that will be made to support learners who disclose any disability or additional learning needs. The Admissions Policy covers admissions to all College provision. There is no separate section covering application and admission to higher education programmes and no reference to Quality Code Expectation B1, UCAS or Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA).

2.12 The review team considered and reviewed the College's documentary evidence and published information and met with staff and students from across the College and from the College's awarding bodies.

2.13 The College publishes a range of information to students and the public in a variety of formats, which are accessible and easy to understand, the majority of which are available bilingually. Information includes assessment, course costs, qualifications gained, student support, complaints procedures, childcare, and reasonable adjustments for learners with learning and/or other disabilities.

2.14 The College publishes specific information to international students about requirements and the application process, including eligibility for study. There is also information available to parents, guardians and carers about the College and the provision available at NPTG.

2.15 There is guidance available to students on the application process on the College's website. References are made, where appropriate, to organisations such as UCAS or the degree-awarding body. There is extensive information for applicants with a previous serious

criminal offence, and the College's Admissions Policy details the steps and other organisations with which the College would work in this instance.

2.16 The review team met a range of staff and students at the review, and they were aware of the individual requirements of the relevant degree-awarding body for their programme.

2.17 Course-specific information regarding entry requirements, assessments and course structure is stated on individual course/programme profiles, available on the College's website. Programme handbooks clearly outline the programme specification, credit, assessment and expectations of students.

2.18 The College operates a five-day response to applications from its Admissions Team, and 10 days for response to the outcome of interviews. The College has developed the internal Learner Information for Tutors (LIFT) system to aid the process of enrolment and admissions. Staff across the College reported that LIFT simplifies staff engagement with regards to tutor support, and training in using the system is being provided to staff across all campuses. The review team **affirms** the development of a Learner Information for Tutors (LIFT) system, which brings together all student information and enables effective support throughout the duration of study (see also Expectation B4).

2.19 The system provides admissions and assessment staff with the necessary information on each applicant, such as interview notes and any assessments for full-time further/higher education and work-based learning programmes, tracking any additional support needs through Individual Learner Plans. Additional learning needs are recorded through the system to share learner information across professional support services and teaching staff.

2.20 The College operates a Publication and Marketing Procedure that outlines the publication of information to staff, students and the public in a range of formats, and Marketing form a central point for the approval of all published material. The Publication and Marketing Procedure appears to be a style guide and the review team did not see a formal process for the approval and monitoring of published information.

2.21 Full-time applications to the College are submitted through the UCAS applications system, and the College is working to ensure that all applications, including those from mature and widening participation students, are submitted through UCAS.

2.22 The College's support for students progressing to further study is recognised by students, and the Student Tutorial Enrichment Programme (STEP HE Programme) supports students with skills development and provides one-to-one support from tutors to aid progression. From 2015-16 the College offers a Looking Forward to Higher Education module, delivered by Level 3 tutors, which provides an introduction to academic skills and the expectations of higher education study. The College's admissions team is also engaging with regional Reaching Wider Partnerships to support local higher education applicants, including the publication of accessible information on recruitment and admissions for widening participation students.

2.23 The College uses progression and attainment data to encourage students who are ready to progress to consider further study. The College has oversight of retention and attendance data through a reporting to Heads of School meeting and monthly reporting to Learning and Performance Management Group, with teaching and support staff in regular communication to identify areas in need of intervention.

2.24 The College recruitment is approximately 60 per cent female, which is partly explained by strong recruitment to health and care and teacher education programmes. The

age profile of entrants is over 50 per cent over 30 and less than 25 per cent under 21. This is in line with the College's commitment to widening participation in higher education in the region.

2.25 Through the establishment of an Enrolment and Recruitment Survey for both higher education and further education students, the College uses this data to enhance enrolment and recruitment practice and policy. The survey does not differentiate between higher education and further education students' responses, which would support the College in continuing to enhance admissions practices in line with feedback from higher education and further education learners.

2.26 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is included in the College Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance, and the awarding bodies publish information regarding the process of RPL. A different policy exists for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) for admissions to Pearson programmes, which the College and its staff are aware of and to which they adhere. Information regarding APL is published to prospective students through the College's Information Pack for Higher Education Applicants and is published on higher education course profiles. The College works closely with Swansea University through academic Link Officers and professional support staff to manage the varying application arrangements for recruitment and admission to Swansea University-awarded programmes.

2.27 The College Admissions Policy is linked to the Equality and Diversity Policy, and includes statements on equal consideration given to applicants with declared disabilities. The College identifies any additional needs as a core element of the application process through the LIFT system. Adjustments are identified at enrolment and a range of additional support or resources are provided to students at this stage to meet individual students' needs.

2.28 Data and applications and admissions information is used by the College and reviewed regularly by a range of staff and committees, including Heads of School, HEMG and the SMT to inform revisions to the College's admissions policies and practices.

2.29 The team concludes that the College's processes, procedures and published information, combined with the effective development of the LIFT system and partnership working with its degree-awarding bodies, ensure that the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.30 The College operates a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which outlines its strategic aims and how it intends to implement and achieve those stated aims. The strategy covers all provision delivered by the College, with a separate annex covering higher education provision. This does not make reference to the Quality Code or to guidelines of awarding bodies. There is no indication of pedagogy or specific teaching and learning used in higher education provision, which is different from that used in further education and which would promote the transition to independent learning.

2.31 The review team examined all the evidence provided and engaged in discussion with staff and students.

2.32 The Responsibilities Checklists indicate that responsibility for selection and recruitment of staff lies with all four awarding universities. The level of involvement of universities in advertising for, interviewing and appointing College staff or of the involvement of the College in this process was clarified in meetings with staff.

2.33 The College has recently established a higher education in further education staff development initiative. Examples of CPD records indicate that several higher education staff attended the meeting in 2014-15 and the work of the group was commended in the UWTS Partnership Review.

2.34 The College produces a Higher Education Student Charter, which outlines responsibilities and expectations of students and staff while at the College. This indicates areas of support offered to students, including the development of academic skills. The Student Charter outlines the College's expectations of learners' engagement with teaching and learning, and what learners can expect from the College.

2.35 The College maintains an online VLE, which stores resources on teaching and learning and course-specific information, and which has links to the relevant university's VLE. Academic schools are responsible for the maintenance of their programme's section of the VLE.

2.36 Each student has a personal tutor who is a member of the programme team. Full-time students are allocated weekly group tutorial sessions with an opportunity for personal tutorials. There is no formal process of training for personal tutors. Students can be referred to College support staff for more specialist support and, if necessary, to external support agencies. Tutorial provision for part-time students is less clear, with time allocated at the beginning or end of sessions for tutorials if required.

2.37 Full programme information, including assessment timetables, is published in programme handbooks to enable students to plan accordingly.

2.38 Senior Lecturers for Teaching and Learning are appointed to promote and ensure the delivery of the highest standards of teaching and learning for all students. The group is

overseen by the Assistant Principal for Quality. This provides a useful opportunity for networking but there is no formal process by which good practice can be shared.

2.39 Good practice is shared through the Senior Lecturers (Teaching and Learning). Good practice is shared formally in academic school meetings where teaching and learning is a standard agenda item, academic school away days and in cross-College staff development, for example excellence workshops and teaching and learning conferences.

2.40 The College has a CPD policy that outlines the responsibilities of managers, individuals and the College's staff development. Processes for application, criteria and evaluation are outlined in the policy document. Records are held centrally of all activities undertaken by staff, and these records are used to inform performance management and appraisal interviews. Staff can apply for staff development at any time, but long-term or high-value development applications are considered by a panel that meets three times a year.

2.41 Staff are able to attend teaching and learning conferences through partner universities. The College hosts workshops and opportunities for staff development and enhancement and has supported a Higher Education in Further Education Staff Development Group across a number of local providers, to share best practice. The College encourages staff to apply for recognition by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). It is not clear how access to research undertaken by HEA will be applied to teaching and learning.

2.42 The College has established two academic support bodies. Lesson Study Groups (LSGs) focus on improving and refining teaching techniques with the focus of meeting particular learning needs of students. Professional Enquiry Groups (PEGs) focus on directly addressing an issue and trying to solve a problem that teachers have identified in their own classroom and in the learning process. There is little evidence of the effectiveness of these groups in practice.

2.43 The College operates a system of ungraded teaching observations undertaken in a taught class setting using a specific higher education observation form and examining Levels of Confidence. Results of observations indicate a 100 per cent Level of Confidence and high levels of teaching. There is no indication of how reports of teaching observations are linked to module/unit performance or student satisfaction. There is no indication of a process of peer observation between staff delivering higher education provision.

2.44 The self-evaluation document does not include details of how student evaluation of teaching and learning on programmes or individual module/units is gathered, analysed and used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The student submission to this review states that students feel unable to comment on teaching.

2.45 There is no indication of the opportunities or support provided by the College for scholarly activity or how College staff may be involved in scholarly activity taking place at partner universities. There is no indication, if this is taking place, of how this may be applied in teaching and learning. The College has produced a draft Scholarly Activity Scheme for 2016-17 but this has not yet been approved or implemented. The team **recommends** that the College establishes a process to record staff engagement with higher education-specific CPD and scholarly activity systematically.

2.46 Individual development plans are agreed for the following academic year between staff and Heads of School through the annual performance management, appraisal and review process. Staff have access to a range of documentation on the College VLE and a teaching and learning newsletter, but it is unclear how this is managed. Individual programmes complete annual monitoring reports either to the universities or internally to HEMG. These outline resource enhancements, periodic review of programmes and approval

of new programmes, quality assurance and enhancement activities, and a review of external examiner reports. The annual monitoring process also includes an annual self-assessment report specifically for higher education provision and reports activity against key areas for development to ensure that standards are monitored and maintained.

2.47 The self-evaluation document makes reference to academic misconduct under section B6. The College has an Academic Misconduct policy that covers all further education and Pearson HN provision and includes examples, procedures for investigation and penalties for offences. Academic misconduct is included in its Guidelines for Internal Quality Assurance. Programmes franchised from universities are subject to their policies and procedures for academic misconduct. Information on academic misconduct is included in sample programme handbooks provided by each awarding body. The College Academic Misconduct Policy states that plagiarism-detection software will be used for work submitted electronically on all higher education programmes. Academic staff stated that there had been no incidences of academic misconduct.

2.48 Students whom the team met expressed admiration for the knowledge, commitment and support of the teaching staff.

2.49 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.50 The College operates an Equality and Diversity Policy, which is overseen by the Diversity Management Group, chaired by the Principal NPT campuses. All line managers have a duty to adopt a proactive and consistent approach when taking action to address issues relating to equality and diversity.

2.51 Student Support Services provide guidance and support to students, including links with external agencies such as Careers Wales advisers. The College also provides students with professional counselling.

2.52 The College provides a Designated Person with responsibility for looked-after children and care leavers on higher education and further education courses. They ensure that students are provided with advice, guidance and support throughout pre-entry, enrolment and throughout their time at the College. The College has been awarded the Buttle Trust Quality Mark.

2.53 Through the College's interview and initial screening process the College assesses the needs of students and responds accordingly. Screening for higher education programmes has not been consistent but is being addressed for the 2016-17 period.

2.54 The results of the screening process feed into LIFT, which is accessible to both staff and students, and allows students to view the screening outcomes and access the appropriate support through referral, study skills workshops and online resources. The review team has affirmed the development of LIFT, which brings together all student information and enables effective support throughout the duration of study (see Expectation B2).

2.55 Students are able to discuss any needs that arise during the year with the Study Support Team, and with their personal tutor. The College provides several systems available to support staff and students and focuses on progression and retention. Student Retention and Transition Officers were introduced in 2015-16 to provide students with support for transitioning into the College and progression between programmes and beyond their time at NPTC. Students whom the team met expressed satisfaction with the support offered by the College.

2.56 The College Fit to Study Policy provides an approach to the management of the physical and mental health of students. The policy operates three levels of concern, including the need to develop action plans during enrolment if necessary, with regular meetings to track progress and monitor the situation. The Head of Student Support is responsible for the maintenance and operation of the policy. The policy document stores the relevant forms for staff and students to complete. It also includes the College's Equality and Linguistic Impact Assessment and Screening document.

2.57 Tutorial sessions are in place for all full-time higher education students to support learning and track progress, while providing academic and pastoral support. Tutorial sessions are a combination of group and individual sessions. There is provision for tutorials for part-time students at allocated times at the beginning and end of teaching sessions but these are not as formally scheduled as those for full-time students. There is no formal training for personal tutors.

2.58 The induction period, with focus on transition, expectations, literacy requirements and activity, is supported by a programme handbook. The Enrolment and Induction Survey demonstrates positive feedback from students, but also that responses were down in 2014-15.

2.59 The College operates a bursary system to support international students, those from Welsh areas of multiple deprivation, care leavers and those progressing to Level 6 study, with 91 applications being considered in 2015-16. There is also a means-tested College Hardship Fund administered by the Student Support Services for assistance with students' living expenses; for the current academic year, two students have received this.

2.60 The team examined documentary evidence and engaged in discussions with staff, students and employers.

2.61 Overall, the College demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles and practice of widening participation. It recruits students from areas of significant social and economic deprivation with participation in higher education below the national average. Many students are adults returning after a long period out of education and many have no previous family history of higher education. The College provides comprehensive guidance, support and encouragement for these students, which enables them to succeed in an environment that caters for their academic and personal needs and one which is fully appreciated by students. The review team considered that the multiple mechanisms to support students, particularly those from non-traditional higher education backgrounds in areas of deprivation, to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential represent **good practice**.

2.62 Learning resource requirements of each programme are considered in the College programme approval process and at validation by universities and Centre Approval by Pearson. Provision of appropriate learning resources is the responsibility of the College. There is no indication of how levels of appropriate resources are maintained, or of a capital expenditure strategy to ensure continuing acquisition of resources to support teaching and learning. In meetings with the team, academic staff expressed satisfaction with the level of learning resources and the College's rapid response to requests for additional resources. Students were less satisfied with the provision of learning resources, citing issues with library, IT and technical resources. Employers whom the team met stated that some technical resources were not compatible with those used in industry.

2.63 There are libraries on the six main College campuses and these include IT resources and study areas. Academic staff work with library staff in updating book stocks and other resources. Library provision is examined at validation and review and was commended in the 2014 USW Institution Reapproval. There are designated higher education study and social spaces on four campuses, which were established as a result of student feedback. The College is working to address falling National Student Survey (NSS) satisfaction in this area, with ongoing discussions at the Higher Education Student Representation Group, with attendance by the Head of Library Services. Students have access to library resources at awarding universities.

2.64 Additional support in academic skills required for higher education study is provided by library and support staff with multiple mechanisms in the College's approach to supporting students with additional learning needs, particularly those from non-traditional higher education backgrounds in areas of deprivation.

2.65 There were some problems with IT facilities in 2014-15, which appear to have been addressed with new servers, replacement of old computers and completion of an IT infrastructure project.

2.66 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.67 The College publishes a Student Charter, which outlines the requirements and expectations of both itself and its students, as well as the College's commitment to providing representation for all students at programme or school level, to providing feedback to students on the outcomes of representations made by students and to providing training for students engaged in representation. The Charter is reviewed annually by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and the Student Representation Group. Students whom the team met were aware of the Charter but not its contents and had been offered training in being representatives by awarding bodies.

2.68 Each programme has two student representatives per year group who form the Student Representation Group and meet monthly via video link to bring representatives from all campuses together. There is no formal election process for representatives and no process for gathering student opinion of how they should be represented.

2.69 The College provides a Student Representative Handbook, which outlines the role and responsibility of student representatives, including guidance on being an effective rep and effective communication, but students whom the team met were not aware of this.

2.70 The team examined documentary evidence provided in advance and at the visit and engaged in discussions with staff and students.

2.71 There does not appear to be a clear system by which the student voice and feedback is presented directly to senior management in a comprehensive and objective manner. It is unclear how specific student feedback is considered at the highest levels, actions agreed and progress monitored and how decisions are fed back to students. Student representation on College committees is sporadic but has improved recently with the involvement of the Lead Student Representative.

2.72 Students' comments suggest that they do not feel able to influence the strategic direction or decisions of the College, and students are unaware of any opportunity to provide in-course feedback on teaching and learning practices. The team **recommends** that the College develops formal processes for electing and training student representatives and monitoring the effectiveness of the arrangements.

2.73 The Student Strategy Group oversees students' experiences and journey through NPTC. There are currently no students in this group and there is no indication of how student opinion and feedback are provided or considered by this group. Minutes of this group for September 2015 indicate a proposed Student Engagement Strategy to be presented at the next meeting; subsequent minutes show that it has still to be produced. There is ongoing work to develop a Students' Union at the College with the aim of holding elections in the 2015-16 academic year.

2.74 The College introduced the VocalEyes process at the Brecon campus in September 2015, which is the main platform for student engagement and the collection of student feedback outside of institutional surveys. This was introduced across the College in 2015 to provide a process specifically for higher education programmes. Guidance exists for students to help navigate the VocalEyes system, and feedback from the Student

Representation Group states that the suggestions that students submit through VocalEyes are not always practical.

2.75 Students are being used in College projects to support the enhancement of students' experiences, for example Information Technology students are involved in IT projects and International Tourism and Event Management students are involved in the project management of Freshers' Fairs at Neath and Afan campuses.

2.76 Student achievement is celebrated through an annual College Awards Ceremony, where staff are asked to submit nominations.

2.77 In response to student feedback regarding library services, the College will be inviting the Head of Library Services to attend Higher Education Student Representation Group meetings to address feedback directly.

2.78 The College takes steps to engage all students. The review team **affirms** the progress made to define and develop student representation and the commitment to embedding student representation at all levels.

2.79 The team concludes that the good levels of rapport, communication and mutual respect that were obvious in meetings with staff and students have led to processes of meaningful engagement of students appropriate to the type of institution and needs of students, and that therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.80 The College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy commits the College to developing authentic, rigorous and developmental assessment for its students. The College has a generic Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which aims to ensure that assessment 'is authentic, consistently rigorous, fair, balanced, proportionate, relevant and developmental'. For university-approved programmes, assessment strategies and methods are approved as part of the approval or reapproval process.

2.81 The College outlines its commitment to assessment that ensures skill development and allows students to measure their learning gain. For university-awarded provision, assessments and exams at Levels 5 and 6 are verified through the university's external examiners or are provided by the university itself, depending on the responsibilities of the College as outlined in the Responsibilities Checklist. For Pearson programmes, assessments are set and verified through the College's external examiners process, which ensures that the vocational context aligns with the theory and learning outcomes of the programme.

2.82 Each programme's assessment methods and learning outcomes are available to current and prospective students on the College's website and are also available in programme handbooks. The information published to students through programme handbooks is comprehensive and follows a template provided by the awarding body.

2.83 The assessment methods used on individual programmes are outlined in the online course profiles and in module specifications contained in each programme specification in programme handbooks, which also contain assessment schedules.

2.84 All exams are conducted in line with the relevant university and Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidelines and are fully and independently invigilated. The examinations team organises this aspect of assessment and communicates directly with the awarding bodies. In general, the awarding bodies require all exams to be marked anonymously. There are different approaches regarding assignments, as outlined in the respective assessment policies. Teaching staff are responsible for the implementation of the marking criteria for the module and assessment practice. The awarding body specifies the responsibility for second marking and/or moderation. Issues are raised in three 2014-15 external examiner reports regarding the standard of marking and moderation (see Expectation B7).

2.85 Course profiles on the College's website also outline and describe Recognition of Prior Learning, and the College's admissions team works with the relevant academic Link Officers and staff at the awarding body.

2.86 The College shares students' marks with the awarding body through an online system for the purpose of Assessment Boards. In response to feedback, the College now appoints an external member to the Assessment and Progression Board and has developed

Terms of Reference, a template agenda and a procedure document available to staff in the 2015-16 academic year.

2.87 Student feedback regarding assessment and feedback practices is positive overall, and indicates that feedback helps them to improve their work. Seventy-six per cent of students agreed that feedback on their work was prompt in 2015. This is in comparison with 95 per cent in the previous academic year. Students are aware of their degree-awarding body policies and regulations with regards to feedback and assessment, such as return of feedback. College policy states that feedback should be returned to students within 15 days, and the College has responded to concerns from students about delays in feedback.

2.88 There are examples of good practice with positive student feedback and responses from external examiners.

2.89 Feedback from external examiners regarding marking and moderation procedures is positive; however, there are a number of instances where external examiners have reported concerns with the moderation of assessed work and inflated marks on some programmes.

2.90 The College is responsible for the first marking and moderation of UWTSD and Swansea University programmes; however, at USW and Glyndŵr, the College is responsible for first marking. External examiners are also provided with documentation outlining moderation of assessed work. It appears, however, that the moderation process has not always been made clear to external examiners.

2.91 The review team **recommends** that the College takes further steps to ensure the effectiveness of internal moderation processes and makes such processes clear for external examiners.

2.92 External examiners also note the level of detail of the feedback to students, and note concerns regarding increased student numbers and the impact on the level of feedback that staff may be able to provide. Annual reports refer to increasing student numbers on programmes, and the College intends on continuing to grow higher education student numbers.

2.93 The College has an induction period during which students are introduced to literacy requirements, including writing style and referencing, and the College provides support through librarians and the STEP Tutorial Programme to develop skills. Literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessment is carried out at interview, and information from the testing is used in individual learning plans, noting any additional support requirements that will be required on programme.

2.94 Extenuating circumstances, internal quality assurance procedures and academic appeals information is available to students through programme handbooks, and is also available through the College's VLE. The various awarding bodies have different guidelines and policies, and the College's policies apply only to students on Pearson programmes. The College's guidelines for students on Pearson programmes cover internal quality assurance, Academic Appeals, Staff Malpractice, Conflict of Interest, Recognition of Prior Learning and Extenuating Circumstances. Students and staff are aware of how to access the relevant information for the awarding body.

2.95 The College publishes and maintains an Academic Misconduct Policy, which provides a definition of plagiarism and outlines the process should a learner be found to be behaving improperly. The policy is available to students in programme handbooks, and both staff and students at the College are aware of the relevant procedures and information regarding Academic Complaints and Appeals. The policy defines plagiarism and other forms

of academic misconduct, and is available to students to whom it applies on the Pearson programmes. On the university-awarded programmes the relevant university policies apply, including for the recognition of prior learning, and are available to students in programme handbooks.

2.96 For provision awarded by a university, assessments and exams are dealt with in different ways. In some cases assessments and exam questions are submitted to the university for approval by the external examiner at Levels 5 and 6, prior to distribution to the students, and in others the university provides the assessments and sets the exams. For Pearson programmes, the assessments are set in the vocational context, link theory to practice, and are verified during the external examiner process.

2.97 Assignments are usually submitted through plagiarism-detection software. Assessment marks are made available to students through the relevant partner university's VLE, with Pearson programme marks being provided through the College VLE with a transcript available at the end of each academic year.

2.98 The evidence made available to the team and the information provided through meetings with teaching and senior staff at the College suggests that the College operates processes that enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the learning outcomes. There are some issues around the marking and moderation of assessed work across the College's provision, and further work needs to be done by the College to address these issues. The review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.99 The awarding bodies appoint external examiners in line with their academic regulations to provide assurance that the standard of each award at the College is maintained at the appropriate level, that the processes for assessment, progression and achievement are sound, and that the standards achieved are comparable with similar programmes and subjects in other UK institutions. Documentation provided by the awarding bodies and awarding organisation, for example the UWTSO and Glyndŵr external examiner handbooks and the Swansea University regulations for external examining, is clear regarding the role of the external examiners. Guidance and training for external examiners is provided by the awarding bodies and organisation.

2.100 For the programmes awarded by a partner university, each university appoints a Link Officer, who provides links to each College Higher Education Coordinator and the Assistant Principal for Higher Education. External examiner visits to the College are either arranged directly with the relevant Higher Education Coordinator or through the university Link Officers. Visits to the College are normally arranged once per academic year, with attendance also required at the final assessment boards. The Pearson external examiner is invited to the assessment board, but is not required to attend under the BTEC guidance.

2.101 The NPTC Group Requirements for Responding to External Examiners document sets out the roles and responsibilities relating to external examiner reports, together with actions required. For franchised programmes the programme Higher Education Coordinator is responsible for preparing the formal response to the external examiner by the appropriate deadline set out by the university, using the appropriate university mechanism. The response must be signed off by the Head of School before being sent to the university.

2.102 The team tested the Expectation by scrutinising documentation, including the NPTC Group Requirements for Responding to External Examiners, all external examiner reports from 2013-14 and 2014-15, College responses to the 2014-15 reports, the review of USW External Examiner Reports for Partner Provision 2014-15, external examiner overview reports and the minutes from LPMG meetings, where the action plans from the reports were monitored and progress reported. The team also met with senior and academic staff and students.

2.103 In the College response to issues raised in the student submission to this review, following the first team visit, LPMG decided that the availability of external examiner reports to students would depend on the outcome of discussions with the awarding bodies so it is clear which aspects relate to the College and not to other partner institutions. This aspect is certainly evident in the overarching 2014-15 USW report on partner provision external examiner reports. Some external examiners' reports are currently not disaggregated to indicate the partner responsible for delivery. The review team **recommends** that, working with the awarding bodies, the College ensures clarity for external examiners where provision is delivered over multiple sites.

2.104 On receipt, each school discusses the external examiners' reports and ensures that the key issues are considered at programme committee meetings (attended by student representatives) and are fed into the annual monitoring process. Annual monitoring reports (AMRs) seen by the team indicate that this process is generally effective, with key actions from the reports included on AMR action plans, and staff and students met at the visit

verified the actions taken. Where reports highlight serious concerns the College states that an action plan is produced by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education, Head of School and programme team and is monitored at the HEMG and Learning and LPMG meetings. Some external examiner reports made available to the team are positive, noting, for example, that 'The programmes employ a good range of assessment strategies, and innovations are introduced with student learning in mind. On the whole, assessment practice is rigorous and fair, with increasing material evidence of the moderation process'; 'In all cases the work seen was appropriate for the level of study, save for those pieces of work which had been referred precisely because they were of inadequate standard in academic terms'.

2.105 Currently, not all awarding body external examiner reports are received centrally at the College; some are sent directly to the relevant Higher Education Coordinator. The College is requesting that this is rectified by the relevant awarding bodies so that central oversight can be achieved, with action plans put in place if any issues are raised in the reports. On receipt centrally the reports are uploaded onto a document sharing site and therefore made available to Heads of School and course teams. All external examiner reports are scrutinised by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education, who produces monthly summaries that are forwarded to the HEMG, the Curriculum and Quality Strategy Group and the LPMG, and to SMT with a consolidation of the summaries, by which themes could be drawn from across the programmes and delivery sites. The College states that they are also made available to students on the VLE; however, students report that they have to request access, rather than having open availability. The evidence provided by the College therefore indicates that there are some shortcomings in the use and availability of external examiner reports.

2.106 However, issues were identified in a number of external examiner reports in 2014-15, where the responses seen by the team were deemed inadequate. For example, the 2014-15 external examiner's report for the BA/HND/HNC in Hotel and Catering/International Tourism/Events Management notes that 'the internal verification/moderation process needs to be more rigorous and reliable. In most cases, it has been observed that the marks awarded by the second marker are absolutely consistent with the first markers. In my opinion, the marks awarded are on the generous side whilst comparing with the national standards'. This was not noted in the external examiner overview report that went to the Curriculum and Quality and LPMG meetings in September 2015, and was only briefly noted in the November 2015 meeting of the HEMG, where an action plan was requested. In addition, two external examiner reports noted over-generous marking and an instance where Pearson grading criteria were not being used and had not been identified in the internal verification process.

2.107 There is no evidence in meeting minutes that issues raised in these external examiner reports were considered at SMT level, nor that an overarching summary of issues raised in external examiner reports was considered at that or other deliberative committees, leading to missed opportunities regarding consolidation of themes, for instance marking and moderation, and identification of, and action on, good practice or areas for improvement. At the meeting with senior staff the team heard that managers can choose to see the full external examiners' reports, as they are available on a document sharing site, that key issues are raised in the monthly summaries, and that issues on franchised programmes are dealt with in the awarding body overview reports and at the Board of Studies meetings with the awarding bodies. The review team **recommends** that the College provides an annual consolidated summary from all the external examiners' reports of the strengths and areas for improvement identified in these reports.

2.108 In summary, the review team considers that the processes in place at the College to ensure the scrupulous use of external examiners, both those of the College and those of the

awarding bodies and organisation, are generally effective. Therefore the Expectation is met, but with moderate risk, as the quality assurance procedures are broadly adequate, but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.109 The processes for monitoring and review of programmes are defined by awarding bodies according to their academic regulations, with monitoring reports produced to their template. Monitoring of Pearson awards is done to their regulations and reports are produced to a College template.

2.110 Annual monitoring reports include reference to external examiner reports, student cohort data and action plans for the current academic year, with progress against the previous year's action plan. Reports are produced by Course Coordinators and are scrutinised by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and HEMG prior to submission to awarding bodies. Review boards are held at awarding bodies to agree reports and action plans, with attendance by Higher Education Course Coordinators and students. These programme reports inform the production of awarding body overview reports and the College SAR.

2.111 Awarding bodies appoint Link Officers for each programme, who support programme teams in the maintenance of academic standards and monitoring of programmes. College Higher Education Course Coordinators are in regular contact with their Link Officers and attend meetings at awarding bodies and assessment boards.

2.112 Awarding bodies undertake reviews of partnerships and approval of delivery of their awards by partner colleges. The College underwent successful reviews by USW in 2014 and UWTSU in 2015.

2.113 The team examined documentary evidence provided before and during the visit and engaged in discussion with staff and students, as well as representatives of two awarding bodies.

2.114 There is no evidence of detailed consideration of annual monitoring reports by senior management. Reports for higher education programmes are examined by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and those for further education by the Assistant Principal for Quality. There is no evidence of ongoing monitoring of programmes mid-year, only the AMRs produced to awarding body deadlines in November, which provide no opportunity for improvements to be made for the start of the academic year in September.

2.115 No cross-College higher education monitoring report is produced. The overall College AMR makes some general references to higher education but the overall focus of the report is on further education provision linked to Estyn criteria. A separate section on higher education, produced in March 2015, is in the form of a quality improvement plan, with no reference to individual programmes and no detailed data analysis. There are targets for completion of actions, most of which were in late 2015; there is no indication of progress on these actions. The review team **recommends** that the College develops mechanisms to provide more detailed oversight by the College's SMT of the monitoring and review of programmes by the relevant awarding bodies, and regular monitoring of progress of the higher education quality improvement plan (see also Expectation A3.3).

2.116 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.117 The College publishes and maintains a Complaints Policy and an Internal Assessments and External Qualifications Policy. Both of these policies cover all provision and services offered by the College. The Assessment and External Qualifications Policy does not differentiate between processes for further education and higher education programmes and makes no reference to the Quality Code, *Chapter B9*. Academic appeals and complaints relating to assessment of university awards are dealt with according to awarding body procedures. Appeals and complaints by students on Pearson awards are dealt with by the College Assessment and External Qualifications Policy, which does not include references to the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment.

2.118 The Responsibilities Checklist outlines the responsibilities of the College in relation to student complaints. For university-awarded programmes, complaints and appeals are dealt with in accordance with university regulations and procedures, which are made available to students through the VLE and in programme handbooks. The varying procedures for different awarding bodies are marked on the VLE. The College's own complaints policies and guidelines are used for students studying on Pearson-awarded programmes.

2.119 The Internal Assessments and External Qualifications Policy outlines the procedures for dealing with and accepting appeals related to assessment, and guidance is made available to staff in relation to the evidence and documentation needed as part of the appeal.

2.120 Published in the Complaints Policy are the timescales for complaint and the timeframe for appeals for students. As a subscriber to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), the College notifies students of the possibility of progressing a complaint to the OIA.

2.121 Complaints are considered and reviewed by a number of groups at the College, which include the Curriculum and Quality Strategy Group, and further scrutinised at the Learning and Performance Management Group and Governor Learning and Performance Management Group meetings. The College publishes an annual Complaints Report, which outlines all the complaints made to the College, including the dates and the decision of the College, which is reported to the College's Corporation Board.

2.122 Complaints reports state that the College reflects on complaints and appeals to enhance its provision through introducing or reviewing guidance and additional monitoring of areas causing complaints. The College also reports complaints by campus and provides a thematic breakdown.

2.123 All complaints are normally dealt with using the College's own policy in the first instance before being passed onto the awarding body for consideration. Students are also able to approach the Higher Education Coordinator in the first instance to raise any concerns, before instigating the complaints procedure. Students and staff are aware of the Academic Complaints and Appeals processes of the College, and students are comfortable

approaching staff with any queries or concerns. Students are also aware of the information published in their Programme Handbooks and on the VLE.

2.124 The review team found that staff and students are familiar with the College's policies in this area and that the information is accessible through a range of formats. The information published to students is clear and comprehensive. The College monitors complaints by reporting the information from complaints through the College's deliberative committees, and uses the information to inform changes to policy or practice. The evidence presented to the review team means that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.125 While the College is not a degree-awarding body, this Expectation applies to the way in which the College provides placement opportunities and delivers foundation degrees that include work-based learning, delivered or supported by other organisations, by agreement with its awarding bodies.

2.126 The College's 2013-16 Higher Education Strategic Plan states, as part of the strategic direction, that the College will 'continue to work with modular-based and credit-based delivery systems to enhance flexibility and progression through the development of vocational/work based training programmes, in particular Foundation Degrees and Higher Apprenticeships'. Currently, 11 foundation degrees are delivered by the College, through the four university partnerships. The University of South Wales and University of Wales Trinity St David have detailed guidance and protocols in place for work placements, with USW also providing a detailed template to be completed by the College and given to the employer.

2.127 The College operates in accordance with the academic frameworks of the validating universities and Pearson, with the delegated responsibilities outlined in the checklists and partnership agreements, together with specific documentation from the awarding bodies regarding work-based and placement learning. The Responsibilities Checklists for USW, Glyndŵr University and UWTSd state that it is the College's responsibility to manage the relationships with placement providers, while for Swansea University the responsibility is shared between the University and the College. Procedures from the awarding bodies are used where available, and brought together in the overarching College's Work Experience Policy and Procedures and the NPTC Group Health and Safety - Section 13.2 - Work Experience Policy. The evidence provided by the College would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.128 The team tested the Expectation by scrutinising further documentation provided by the College, including workplace agreements and end-of-placement evaluation forms, as well as in meetings with employers, students and staff.

2.129 The College's Work Experience Policy and Procedures identifies the relationship with the curriculum being studied and supports students to associate the link between College-based learning and practical application. The Policy identifies the staff member responsible for coordinating the College's work experience activities.

2.130 The Assistant Principal for Higher Education is responsible for liaison and monitoring with the partner university. All foundation degrees delivered at the College include work-based learning, apart from the FdA Music Performance and Production (see Section A1), either by means of students using the learning gained in existing employment, or on placement or in a simulated work environment, with the learning outcomes assessed in modules such as Workplace Practice (FdA Care Studies) and Development of Professional Practice (FdA Childhood Studies). Work Experience Coordinators are responsible for monitoring and vetting providers to ensure their compliance with the Health and Safety Code of Practice. Lecturers/Higher Education Coordinators are responsible for completing the Employer Health and Safety Request for vetting.

2.131 The majority of the HNC/D programmes also contain a unit requiring the assessment of work-related learning outcomes, for example an Employability and Professional Development unit on the HNC/D Computing and Systems Development, and an Academic and Professional Development unit on the HND Business Studies.

2.132 Work-based settings for the College's higher education students are assessed and monitored in accordance with the awarding body requirements, together with the College Work Experience Policy and Procedures. The College states that employers providing work-based learning opportunities receive an employer pack, together with course and module information. Students are provided with a Student Pack with the relevant safety information and paperwork in advance of their placement, and receive a health and safety induction by the employer, which is monitored using Appendix 1 of the work-based learning documentation. The student is responsible for liaising with the employer providing the work placement, and arranging for a signed employer agreement to be in place prior to the start of the placement. Students met at the visits were generally complimentary regarding the information and support they receive from College staff in advance of and during placements, and the ability to give feedback on the placement.

2.133 The College states that it requests a nominated contact at the workplace, together with a schedule of contact and feedback on the student, with both the student and the employer completing evaluation forms on completion of the placement. The employer is responsible for ensuring that the student receives a health and safety induction on their first day on placement, and the student completes an induction checklist. Programme leaders or designated placement tutors are responsible for making telephone contact with the placement employer, and ensuring that each party has the necessary contact details. The placement employer and the College then work in partnership, with the employer encouraged to contact the tutor should there be issues concerning performance, attitude or conduct at the earliest possible time. End-of-placement forms enable the employer to give feedback on the student's performance while on placement, rating a range of aspects, including communication, motivation, awareness of health and safety issues and relevant legislation, on a scale from poor to excellent.

2.134 However, the team found that, while the activity on placements is carried out satisfactorily, with students very well prepared for the placements by the College, employers met at the visit reported receiving inadequate information from the College on the curriculum and student progress on the course, even when the employer is responsible for the tuition fees. The team noted that the Foundation Degree Wales report in 2013 made the recommendation that partnerships 'Develop clear work-based learning policies to ensure comparability of experience for students and appropriate guidance for employers'. The team **recommends** that the College ensures that all employers are provided with appropriate information on course content and students' progress.

2.135 In summary, the team found that the processes in place at the College enable this Expectation to be met. However, the risk level is deemed moderate because while quality assurance procedures regarding placements are broadly adequate, there are some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.136 The College does not offer any research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.138 Of the 10 Expectations in this area, the review team judged the risk in seven Expectations to be low; in the case of the remaining three Expectations, the risk was judged to be moderate. The recommendations deriving from two of these Expectations relate to the desirability of introducing an annual consolidated summary of strengths and weaknesses identified in all external examiner reports (Expectation B7), and of developing, in association with its awarding bodies, mechanisms for more detailed oversight by the College itself of the partners' monitoring and review processes (Expectation B8). Taken together, implementation of these recommendations would ensure that the College has an ongoing overview across the whole of its higher education provision. The third recommendation relates to the need to ensure that all employers are provided with appropriate information on both the course content of programmes on which their employees or students are on placement and on the progress of the students themselves.

2.139 The review team also recommends that the College takes steps to facilitate employer input to the design and approval of programmes (Expectation B1), and that it establishes a process to record systematically staff engagement with higher education-specific CPD and scholarly activity.

2.140 Taken overall, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information About Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Responsibility for published information is with the College's Marketing Group and is moderated through the publication of a Publication and Marketing Procedure. Information related to teaching and learning through course profiles and programme handbooks is produced by Higher Education Coordinators and programme teams. Information relating to the awarding body is approved by the individual university before publication, and the College's website links to the university's sites. Course information is updated and reviewed annually. The College has invested in a Curriculum Occurrence Editor (COED) system to manage the consistency of information across the College.

3.2 The College Publicity and Marketing Policy is largely a style guide for use in producing information, and does not outline the process for checking material for accuracy, currency, appropriateness or alignment to current guidelines. There does not appear to be a formalised process of approval of published information. The College ensures that higher education material and information is properly managed, which includes producing prospectuses, course leaflets and social media marketing. The College appears to have a good range of marketing activity and resources to meet a variety of audiences, through the publication of an assortment of information and attendance at various events.

3.3 The higher education prospectus comprises pages on each programme identical to course leaflets. There is no information about the College, awarding bodies, links to universities, fees, bursaries or progression. The full-time and part-time prospectuses on the College website make very little reference to higher education provision or progression from further education. The list of achievements only shows further education students progressing to universities. It was not possible to download the higher education prospectus from the website.

3.4 Prospectuses include images of students and quotations, and the College obtains permission from the students who appear in College prospectuses.

3.5 Programme handbooks for university awards are produced by the relevant university. The sample from UWTSD is contextualised for NPTC students. The handbook from Glyndŵr University is written for its own students, with specific information for NPTC students. The Swansea University handbook is written specifically for NPTC students. The handbook for Pearson programmes is produced by the College. The information published in the handbooks is comprehensive and helpful for students.

3.6 Programme handbooks, the VLE and online course profiles outline information relating to teaching and learning, including learning outcomes, assessment, assessment calendars and resources available. Some online course profiles are blank.

3.7 Each programme has a handbook, which follows either the awarding body templates or the College templates for Pearson. They are available online and in hard copy, and comprehensive information about the provision and awarding university is available on

the VLE. The higher education VLE pages include information related to academic complaints, appeals, extenuating circumstances and the student voice.

3.8 Students receive an official transcript at the end of their studies, from either the awarding body or the College.

3.9 The College provides an overview of its quality assurance functions on its website and through a document sharing site for staff.

3.10 The College's website has published information with regards to admissions and applications, including key information for prospective students such as fees, curriculum and qualifications.

3.11 The College has a range of student support services, information about which is accessible on the College's website and through the VLE. The Student Charter is available through the College's website and through the VLE, and outlines the mutual expectations of the College and its students. Higher Education Coordinators have responsibility for their VLE sites, and training is available from IT Services to support staff in using the system. Students note that the VLE is a useful resource to support their learning and is used effectively by staff.

3.12 Key information sets and other items of public information are available through the College's website, linked through Unistats. Information relating to the College's partners is available online, including the other degree-awarding bodies.

3.13 The College takes consideration of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance on additional course costs, and ensures that each publication that contains relevant information includes version control. Information regarding fees and additional course costs is published in the College's Higher Education Fees and Financial Support document. There is a lack of consistency with regards to the publication of information about additional course costs in programme handbooks. For example, BA International Tourism and Event Management and FdSc Sports Coaching and Development are noted as including additional course costs; however, this is not present in the programme handbooks, which do not clarify whether these costs are mandatory for progression on the programme, for example in the case of BSc Care Studies, which requires a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that all additional course costs are clearly indicated in all appropriate information.

3.14 The College operates a Welsh Language Scheme, which is the responsibility of the College CEO, and which reports primarily to the Bilingual Management Group and SMT meetings. There is an agreed Welsh Language Services Checklist, to which the College adheres, which also includes the ability of students to submit assessed work in Welsh. The College is currently working towards having 14 full-time members of Welsh-speaking teaching staff and is preparing for the introduction of the Welsh Language Commissioner's Standards.

3.15 The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that mechanisms are in place for central oversight and monitoring of the accuracy and timeliness of all published information.

3.16 Overall, the review team considers that the College produces information on the quality of learning opportunities that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The procedures in place are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings with regards to the consistency of information provided on the College's website, the consistent provision of bilingual information online, and the consistency of information published with regards to additional course costs. There is also a lack of clarity around a formal approval process for

publishing information. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

3.17 In determining its judgement on the quality of information about learning opportunities, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.18 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met but that the risk is moderate. Overall, the review team considers that the College produces information on the quality of learning opportunities that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The procedures in place are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings with regards to the consistency of information provided on the College's website, the consistent provision of bilingual information online, and the consistency of information published with regards to additional course costs. The review team therefore recommends that the College ensures that all additional course costs are clearly indicated in all appropriate publications.

3.19 There is also a lack of clarity around a formal approval process for publishing information, and the review team recommends that the College ensures that mechanisms are put in place for central oversight and monitoring of the accuracy and timeliness of all published information.

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

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College does not have a specific strategy for enhancement, nor does it identify processes for embedding enhancement into curricula or delivery of provision. The College sets annual enhancement themes, which are included in the cross-College NPTG self-assessment reports. These SARs make little specific reference to higher education.

4.2 Development of enhancement in teaching and learning is the responsibility of the Teaching and Learning Strategy Group, led by the AP Quality. No terms of reference or minutes of meetings of this group are provided. The activities of this group are reported to the Quality Strategy Group, the minutes of which are concerned with strategic developments and operational issues, but which do not specifically refer to enhancement. Enhancement of teaching and learning is to be achieved by 'the joined up approach to teaching observations and PMAR underpinned by the College Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy'. The Performance Management and Review (PMAR) policy is primarily concerned with procedures to deal with and support under-performing staff and makes no specific reference to enhancement.

4.3 The self-evaluation document states that the introduction of video learning technology is crucial to the continuous enhancement of learning opportunities, but there is no description of how this is achieved and no evidence provided to support it. Two of the themes of the IT Strategy Group are to enhance IT user experience and to improve the quality of data reporting. The minutes of this group do not make specific reference to enhancement of students' experience of IT or how data reporting is used for enhancement. There have been a number of improvements made to the College IT infrastructure and management information systems, but there is no indication of how this will enhance learning opportunities.

4.4 The College has recently introduced a Student Strategy Group. This is a cross-College group covering all levels of provision, with the Assistant Principal for Higher Education as a member. Minutes of meetings provided show some specific reference to higher education but no specific reference to enhancement.

4.5 The HEMG makes most decisions relating to enhancing the higher education student experience, informed by the student voice, annual monitoring and other mechanisms, leading to recent improvements including the introduction of different coloured lanyards and higher education student common rooms. It also refers feedback to other groups such as the IT Strategy and Student Strategy groups to approve improvements.

4.6 The purpose of the Curriculum Strategy Group is to enhance the curriculum to meet the needs of students and employers, for example the Skills Priorities Programme. This includes development of new curricula, and modifications and administration of the Curriculum Development Fund to support these initiatives.

4.7 The Quality Strategy Group oversees the quality of delivery of curricula and monitors outcomes. It contributes to enhancement through response to the student voice, complaints and addressing quality issues as they arise. LPMG oversees all these other groups; it approves and monitors the actions of each group and, as such, contributes to

enhancement. All these groups except the HEMG cover all provision at the College, with minutes, where provided, indicating predominantly further education business.

4.8 The minutes of the Higher Education Coordinators Group for January 2015 indicate an item on enhancement themes to be carried forward to the next meeting. There is no indication of this item in minutes of subsequent meetings and enhancement is not a standard agenda item.

4.9 The College is taking steps to improve its student-facing initiatives and the power of the student voice with the introduction of exclusive higher education representative groups and a greater sense of higher education identity, which could contribute to enhancement.

4.10 Despite the initiative described above, there is no evidence of a strategy or of oversight of enhancement. There is no indication of processes to drive enhancement or to ensure that it is considered at all levels. There is no evidence of data analysis to initiate enhancement. There is no indication of specific staff development on enhancement or the means by which it can be disseminated across programmes and schools of study.

4.11 The student submission to this review makes no reference to students' understanding of, or contribution to, enhancement, and students whom the team met demonstrated little understanding of enhancement.

4.12 The processes indicated above would suggest a strategic approach to, and oversight of, enhancement. However, as indicated, these processes have not been followed by the various groups with responsibility for oversight of enhancement. Initiatives suggested have not been followed up, there is no evidence of enhancement being considered at committees, and there is no strategic incentive to engage with enhancement. This, together with the overall lack of understanding around enhancement demonstrated by staff at all levels and students, leads the team to conclude that the Expectation is not met.

4.13 The team examined evidence provided prior to and during the visit and engaged in discussions with the College Principal, senior, academic and support staff, and students, all of whom demonstrated differing and incomplete understanding of enhancement. A number of examples were provided by academic and support staff but there was no evidence of a connected approach or dissemination of enhancement.

4.14 Meetings with academic and support staff indicated a small number of examples of enhancement at programme level. An example was provided by IT staff in response to student feedback; however, this was necessary to address issues raised by students. The small number of examples of actions taken that could be considered enhancement, and the lack of a structure by which good practice and enhancement could effectively be shared across the College, suggest actions taken in response to demand rather than a coherent approach to enhancement. The lack of evidence that enhancement has been required and considered at higher levels suggests that although the processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met, they are not being followed in practice.

4.15 The team **recommends** that the College develops a strategic approach to enhancement and ensures that enhancement initiatives are developed and implemented in a planned manner across the College.

4.16 The team concludes, therefore, that this Expectation is not met and the risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.18 The one Expectation in this area was judged not to be met. Although the review team saw evidence of a clear commitment by the College to enhancing the learning opportunities and experience of its students, it was unable to find evidence of an overall strategy or deliberate steps to implement a structured approach to enhancement, and the monitoring of its implementation and dissemination. Staff at all levels and students demonstrated differing or incomplete understanding of enhancement in the context of higher education.

4.19 The review team therefore recommends that the College develops a strategic approach to enhancement and ensures that enhancement initiatives are developed and implemented in a planned manner across the College.

4.20 The review team concludes therefore that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on Internationalisation

5.1 The College's 2014-17 International Strategy states that the College's mission regarding internationalisation is 'to provide world class UK and overseas education, training, skills and consultancy provision to meet the needs of individuals, organisations and Governments', with a three to five-year aim of having College campuses in five or more overseas countries, to provide education, training and consultancy to individuals, organisations and governments. The strategy also identifies the strengths and weaknesses of Wales as a vocational higher education provider for these markets.

5.2 The Welsh Government has stated that one of its priorities for higher education is for providers to work in partnership with the government to develop international links, and the College is active in taking this policy forward. To this end the College established a sub-brand, NPTC International, in 2013 and appointed an Assistant Principal for Worldwide Operations to develop its international activities further.

5.3 The College is a member of TVET UK (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), with the Assistant Principal for Worldwide Operations a TVET UK Council member. It is also a member of Colegau Cymru Chongqing (China) Consortium and has an international language school in Hampshire, LSI Portsmouth. The College holds a UK Home Office Licence and HTS (Highly Trusted Sponsor) status, allowing the Group to sponsor full-time international students with a Tier 4 Visa to study within the College, although there are currently no Tier 4 students studying at the College at Level 4 or above. Though there have been a number of admissions of international students to the College on a range of visa types, the College has sponsored two students through its licence.

5.4 The College has been successful in receiving British Council funding through the Skills for Employability project (working with Chinese partners), the UK/China Principals Shadowing project and the New Zealand Sports Development programme. The British Council - Wales supported the visit to New Zealand to develop a programme of international exchange that will provide an enhanced global perspective for learners studying higher education foundation-level courses in Coaching and Development. The premise was for NPTC Group students studying the Foundation Degree in Sports Coaching and Performance to work with New Zealand partners to help deliver a programme of activities to local schoolchildren in the Auckland area, while gaining access to talks and events from elite sporting institutions on the North Island. Students have also been offered a scholarship opportunity to Chongqing Polytechnic. The College offers internal and external funding to support opportunities for its students to study abroad and undertake study visits.

5.5 The Internationalisation Strategy has not as yet resulted in the College setting up international campuses. Currently, the international work involves the development of the curriculum to include a focus on globalisation and international theories and approaches, together with study abroad opportunities for students. The former includes a focus on international approaches in specific modules and programmes, for example International Culture and Communications and Global Business on the BA (Hons) Business Studies top-up, Global Tourism and Destination Management on the BA (Hons) International Tourism and Event Management (ITEM), International Travel Operations on the FD, HNC and HND ITEM, World Cuisine on the HND Hotel and Catering Management, National Identity in Europe 1860-1945 and Culture and Belief in Renaissance Europe on the BA (Hons) English and History.

5.6 Over the last two years the College has welcomed Chinese delegates from Chengdu to undertake teacher training. This involved delivery from the higher education teacher training team and senior lecturers in teaching and learning. Newtown has played host to 16 staff and students for a two-week itinerary as part of the College's International

Culture trip. The College has recently hosted the first cohort from the Chongqing City Management College Workstation Project. The aim is to develop the vocational teacher training skills of the staff, and the delegates are attending teacher training sessions and are in a College placement for four months. The College is also working with a college in St Petersburg to offer business students a cultural and academic visit in July 2016. The visit will include Russian language classes and visits to prominent businesses in the city.

5.7 The College takes an active role in investigating opportunities for international collaboration. It is involved in the Future Directions for Higher Education in Wales through its partner universities and through membership of a number of groups dedicated to the development of international provision. Students and staff met at the review visit were able to give examples of international opportunities.

5.8 A number of the College's higher education programmes include modules that offer a broad range of international perspectives, both to attract overseas students and to provide UK students with experience of international theories and practices, for example Global Tourism and Destination Management on the BA International Tourism and Events Management and World Cuisine on the HND Hotel and Catering Management.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 27 to 29 of the [Higher Education Review: Wales handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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