Initial Review of New College Pontefract

May 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an Initial Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at New College Pontefract. The review took place from 10 May 2016 to 12 May 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Brian Whitehead
- Sophie Elliot (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by New College Pontefract 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 Initial Review, the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
- 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 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 3.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] A dedicated section explains the method for Initial Review[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.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk//the-quality-code
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[3] Initial Review web pages: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Initial-Review.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about New College Pontefract

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of its awarding organisation **is likely to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **is likely to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **is likely to meet** UK expectations.

Good practice

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

- The student-centred ethos and support, which enhances the student learning experience (Expectation B4).
- The comprehensive management of work placements, which supports both students and the placement providers (Expectation B10).

Recommendations

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

By September 2016:

- formalise curriculum planning, development and approval processes to support the progression of higher education provision within the College (Expectation A3.1)
- implement a formal process that incorporates external input for the systematic design and development of programmes (Expectation B1)
- ensure that course material is formally considered to verify its fitness for purpose (Expectation B1)
- clarify the process for using external verifier reports to enhance provision and involve students in their consideration (Expectation B7).

By January 2017:

- develop and implement a formal system for student representation and involvement in deliberative committees, which enhances their role as partners in learning (Expectation B5).

Affirmations

The QAA review team makes the following **affirmation** to New College Pontefract.

- The steps taken to make improvements to internal moderation and marking.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the Guidance available on the QAA webpage explaining Initial Review.

About New College Pontefract

New College Pontefract was recognised as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in April 2014 and is one of the top performing sixth form colleges nationally. The College is situated not far from the centre of Pontefract.

Its mission is to provide dynamic, high quality learning experiences in a supportive, inclusive environment, enabling academic success and personal growth. This mission is supported by a Vision, which is to be an inclusive provider of education in which students and staff work together to achieve potential and transform lives.

The college currently has more than 2,100 full-time 16-18 students, with around 60 per cent studying A levels and the others vocational pathways. The College has one course validated for higher education delivery by Pearson Education, in Sport and Exercise Science. For the 2015-16 academic year student enrolment on this programme was 25 students.

While higher education at the College is a new venture, the College has plans to grow the provision, particularly around the areas of Health and Social Care and Computing, which are regarded as areas of strength.

The current higher education courses have been designed to provide a second chance for learners and to provide the chance for local people to progress to higher education where the opportunity to progress might be inhibited by personal, family or financial reasons. The College endeavours to capitalise on existing extensive pastoral and academic support arrangements to ensure the quality of learning experience for its higher education students. This entails the amendment of successful systems from Level 3 provision to provide differentiated systems at Level 4.

The College recognises that it faces challenges in fulfilling its plans around higher education. These include the need to recruit to an appropriate level of viability, to integrate fully the requirements of higher education quality processes within the rest of the College, the development and embedding of higher education into the Annual Programme Review, and the embedding of the ethos and culture of higher education provision. Additional challenges include the impact of changing funding formulae, the impact of curriculum changes at Levels 2 and 3, the development of suitable higher education accommodation, and the competitive environment in the region.

Explanation of the findings about New College Pontefract

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 its awarding organisation

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The responsibility for the alignment with the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) is with the awarding organisation, Pearson. In designing the programmes the College uses the Pearson modules and modifies the contents to fit in with the students' needs. In developing the modules the College is advised and guided by Pearson, while taking account of the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements. The College also takes into consideration advice from professional bodies and complementary providers to ensure the possibilities of academic progression for the students.

1.2   The team found that the College has appropriate systems and processes in place for the design and approval of programmes, as these are determined by the awarding organisation. This process ensures that the programme(s) are aligned with the FHEQ and that account is taken of Subject Benchmark Statements. However, the team found that while the design and development of the programme meets the Expectation and that staff showed some awareness of the Quality Code and Subject Benchmark Statements, a more comprehensive awareness among staff could be beneficial.

1.3   The team read policy and process documents from the awarding organisation, and examined evidence of programme specifications. The use of the national framework in design, approval and delivery was discussed in meetings with staff.

1.4   The team considers that, while the process currently works in practice, changes to the internal processes to involve staff of the College more in the development of the programme, and to ensure that they are fully aware of the Quality Code and Subject Benchmark Statements, could add to the effectiveness.

1.5   On the basis of the evidence provided, the team finds that the College, working with its awarding organisation, has appropriate systems, processes, policies and procedures in place for the design and approval of its programmes, which ensure that they align with the FHEQ and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation A1 of the Quality Code and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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.

Findings

1.6   The College relies on the regulations provided by Pearson for the setting and maintenance of academic standards and, although no academic credits have yet been awarded, the team saw evidence that these regulations are being operated by the College. Information about the grade criteria is provided for staff and students, there is an internal verification process, and Pearson provides an external verifier to oversee the processes.

1.7   The team finds that the College has appropriate regulatory systems, policies and processes in place that are comprehensive and transparent, and that these arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.8   The team looked at the academic regulations and guidance to their use provided by the awarding organisation, external examiner standardisation reports, and held meetings with staff and students. The College has designed and published a Vocational Centre Handbook, which outlines separate procedures and frameworks for Higher Nationals, as well as BTECs. This differentiation clearly sets out details of the amendments to procedures that make them appropriate for higher education, and specifies, for instance, that all Higher National qualifications are subject to clarification and approval by the Higher Education Assessment Board.

1.9   On the basis of the evidence provided, and the fact that the College is currently offering one programme, the team considers that the College has an appropriate set of academic regulations in place and that the process works in practice.

1.10   The Team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation A2.1 and that the associated risks are low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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.

Findings

1.11   Programme specifications are approved by the awarding organisation and these documents are included in the College's internal documentation. Programme specifications are used as a reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, and they are made available to students at the beginning of the course. Learning outcomes are delivered as students are exposed to the individual units.

1.12   As this is the first year of the programme there have been no changes to the programme, and the College indicates that there are no plans to make changes that would involve the awarding organisation.

1.13   These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.14   The team read the programme specifications and the information made available to students. The team also discussed the process with academic staff and the programme manager.

1.15   From this analysis the team concludes that the process works effectively in practice, this being the first year of the programme. The College staff are very supportive of the students and ensure they fully understand the learning objectives of the programme they are studying and how this relates to the assignment briefs. The staff also work together closely as a team with definitive records available, and there is no indication that this might change in the future.

1.16   On the basis of the evidence provided, the College has processes and procedures in place to maintain an accurate, definitive record of its higher education provision, which sets out intended learning outcomes and programme attributes.

1.17   The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation A2.2 and the associated risks are low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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.

Findings

1.18   Pearson is responsible for the validation of programmes held at the College. The College underwent an approval process to ensure that it was capable of providing the appropriate level of delivery for higher education courses validated by Pearson. In the design and approval of higher education at the College, the team finds that frameworks provided by Pearson are adhered to in ensuring that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standards. The HNC/D in Sports and Exercise Science is aligned to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The responsibility for the design of the HNC/D is assigned to the Sports and Exercise Science staff team, who, with guidance from the Assistant Principal, use Pearson templates, which outline learning outcomes at programme and module level.

1.19   The College adheres to frameworks provided by Pearson in the design and approval of the HNC/D, aligning with the QFC and therefore meeting UK threshold standards.

1.20   The team met staff who were involved in the design and development of the programme, after analysing documents, minutes and evidence provided by the College.

1.21   The rationale behind the College's progression into higher education is based on current Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) principles, ensuring that the provision is relevant to expanding local industries, and aligns with government priorities. The team found that the development of the higher education provision is to provide internal progression opportunities for current further education students. Internal processes for the design of programmes at the College are currently informal in approach, with no formal policies or support mechanisms currently in place for staff designing programmes to ensure successful development of the higher education provision. Therefore the team **recommends** that the College formalises curriculum planning, development and approval processes to support the progression of higher education provision within the College.

1.22   The Team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation A3.1 and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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

1.23   The College designs modules on the HNC/D in Sports and Exercise Science within the assessment framework provided by Pearson. Learning outcomes are set within these frameworks, which the College embeds into assessment throughout the programme. Assessments are approved externally and Pearson oversees grading before qualifications are awarded. The requirements of students to meet learning outcomes is communicated through detailed assignment briefs provided by the College, and which meet UK threshold standards. Further discussion surrounding assessment can be found under Expectation B6.

1.24   The College uses Pearson frameworks in the design and delivery of the HNC/D, which aligns with the QCF. Therefore, qualifications are awarded through the achievement of relevant learning outcomes that meet UK threshold standards, which would lead to the Expectation being met.

1.25   The team met students, delivery staff and the internal verifier, examining evidence provided by the College.

1.26   The requirements of students to meet learning outcomes is communicated through detailed assignment briefs provided by the College, which meet UK threshold standards. The team finds that staff at the College meet the Pearson criteria when developing programmes, ensuring that a thorough system of internal and external verification is executed when moderating assessments.

1.27   The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation A3.2 and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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*

1.28   The responsibility for the monitoring and the review of the higher education provision is shared between the College and Pearson. The process of external verification ensures that the HNC/D meets UK threshold academic standards and Pearson standards in design and in practice; however, no formal internal policies or processes are in place that explicitly address whether or not academic standards are being monitored and maintained. See Expectation B8 for more detail of the monitoring and review of programmes in place.

1.29   The team finds it likely that the College would meet the Expectation as staff follow Pearson guidance when designing programmes, ensuring that UK threshold standards are met and that academic standards required by the awarding organisation are being maintained.

1.30   The team tested the Expectation from the evidence provided and discussion with staff responsible for the monitoring and review of programmes.

1.31   The College uses Pearson guidance effectively in the design of programmes, ensuring that academic standards are initially met. The internal and external verifiers actively review the higher education provision and the staff respond appropriately to feedback received, maintaining academic standards set by Pearson within the HNC/D.

1.32   The team concludes that through the scrupulous use of Pearson guidance, the College is likely to meet Expectation A3.3 and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.33   The College works within the framework for HNC/D qualifications provided by Pearson in the design and development of the higher education provision. Pearson appoints an external verifier, who works closely with the internal verifier at the College, in the moderation of assessment. The external verifier provides advice and support for the College in the progression of its higher education provision. See Expectation B1 for further details surrounding the use of externality within programme design and approval.

1.34   The team finds that the Expectation is likely to be met through the College's use of external and independent expertise within the development and design of programmes within the higher education provision.

1.35   The team met staff involved in the design and development of programmes at the College, analysing evidence provided detailing external verifier reports, meeting minutes and Pearson guidelines.

1.36   Adhering to Pearson guidelines and using external verifier feedback, the College actively engages with external sources when setting and maintaining academic standards within programme design and maintenance of UK threshold standards.

1.37   The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation A3.4, with the associated level of risk being low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its awarding organisation: Summary of findings

1.38   In reaching its positive judgement, the team matched the findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA in December 2014.

1.39   The team took into consideration that the College's awarding organisation has ultimate responsibility for the setting of the academic standards. All seven Expectations for this judgement area are likely to be met and the associated level of risk for all has been assessed as low. The team has noted that the primary responsibility for the setting of standards lies with Pearson. A positive judgement in this area demonstrates that the College is aware of its responsibilities for maintaining those standards.

1.40   While the Expectation under A3.1 is likely to be met, and the associated level of risk is low, the team makes one recommendation. This is because the approval process for the development of higher education programmes remains unclear within management structures, and no formal policies or support mechanisms are in place to ensure successful development of the provision.

1.41   Notwithstanding this recommendation, the team concludes that the policies and procedures at New College Pontefract **are likely to meet** UK expectations in maintaining the academic standards set by its awarding organisation.

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

Findings

2.1   The HNC/D in Sports and Exercise Science is the first programme offered by the College within its higher education provision. The development of the programme was influenced by the College's widening participation agenda, meeting the needs of students progressing from Level 3 to Level 4, with a consideration towards the LEP priorities. Academic standards within the programme are aligned with the Pearson guideline criteria in the process of design and development. The content of assessments, written by course staff, was influenced by research into higher education provision within other local institutions, including Holy Cross College, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds Trinity University and All Saints College. Informal input from local businesses such as the Rugby Football League was also incorporated into programme design. The programme content is approved by Pearson before qualifications are awarded.

2.2   The HNC/D was designed to enable the progression of further education students within the College. Programme content was influenced by local industry needs, alongside the consideration of staff specialisms and institution facilities to optimise the effectiveness of programme delivery during the design and development process. Therefore, the team finds it likely that the Expectation would be met.

2.3   The team met programme staff and senior staff to discuss the design, development and approval of the College's higher education provision. The team also explored evidence provided to test the Expectation.

2.4   Academic standards within the programme are aligned with Pearson guidelines in design and development, which ensure that learning opportunities meet awarding body standards. The College has strong links with local industry professionals and businesses, which are used in the design of the programme to ensure that programme content is industry relevant and reflects government priorities within the LEP. This process enhances learning opportunities for students, opening the possibility of successful work experience placements. However, there is currently no formal policy or recording strategy in place to ensure that employer feedback is input to programme design. The team **recommends** that the College implements a formal process that takes advantage of external input for the systematic design and development of higher education programmes. Programme staff who write the course content also provide further course material to aid the development of student learning outside of unit requirements. These tasks and material are not part of the official assessment process, but provide a platform for discussion between staff and students. The team found some examples of further material provided to be unclear in relation to course content and Level 4 threshold standards, and therefore **recommends** that the College ensures that the course material is formally considered to verify its fitness for purpose.

2.5   Overall, the team finds that the design, development and approval process that the College has in place meets Pearson standards. The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation B1 and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Moderate

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.

Findings

2.6   The College does not yet have a specific higher education admissions policy. This year's intake was the first year, and all students have progressed internally. This recruitment has been primarily through word of mouth via staff at the College, supplemented by a higher education open event which targeted groups of potential students.

2.7   The recruitment and admission processes are thorough and supportive of applicants. Students reported that they were well informed of the programme by promotions such as internal posters, class visits with group and individual meetings, and responses to a direct questionnaire. Upon receipt of a completed application form the higher education team meets to discuss whether the applicant should be offered an interview, which involves a short written test and a series of questions. Applicants are informed that they will receive notification of outcome within two weeks of the interview. The higher education team meets to decide whether to make an unconditional offer of a place, a conditional offer pending Level 3 results, or no offer.

2.8   To appeal against an admission decision students would follow the further education appeals procedure and can appeal directly to the Board of Governors. No students have appealed, and no explicit reference is made in the policy to higher education students.

2.9   The process meets the Expectation and the planned improvements for the design would ensure that the design meets the Expectation.

2.10   The team tested this Expectation by meetings with staff and students, examination of paperwork relating to application process, and discussion of the new policy.

2.11   While this year's process was thorough and effective and followed the principles of fair admission, the College has identified, as an area for development, that the higher education admissions process needs to be included in its Admissions Policy for next academic year.

2.12   The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation B2 and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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.

Findings

2.13   The College, working with its staff and students, supports every student to enable them to develop as an independent learner. During this first year of delivery there have been several systematic reviews of learning opportunities and teaching provision. Students give formal feedback at the end of each module, in addition to informal feedback during the module. These formal processes include Lesson Observations, Module Evaluations through the College VLE, Student Voice focus groups conducted by the Student Voice Coordinator and Mid-Term Progress Reviews. The informal processes include regular and frequent meetings between staff who have been responsible for developing, teaching and assessing the course. These meetings reflect on whether the content and teaching are sufficiently enhancing the learning opportunities for the students. The outcomes from these formal and informal mechanisms are intended to feed into the Annual Programme Review.

2.14   The Annual Programme Review (APR) incorporates student feedback about the programme and the teaching they have received, alongside the annual student satisfaction surveys. The APR outcomes are considered by the College management team.

2.15   The team finds that the College has appropriate systems, processes and policies in place, which are designed to assure and enhance the quality of learning, and that the design would meet the Expectation.

2.16   The team read policies and minutes of teaching and senior meetings and documents generated by teaching observations, and discussed the process in meetings with staff and students.

2.17   On the basis of the scrutiny of the evidence provided, the team judges that the College has effective policies and processes in place to enable it to articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, and that, consequently, every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject in depth, and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

2.18   The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation B3 and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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

2.19   The College has in place several arrangements and processes to enable the students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Students can communicate freely and informally with academic staff in addition to the formal reviews throughout the year. These arrangements reflect the overarching ethos of the College, which is reflected in its vision to be an inclusive provider of education in which students and staff work together to achieve potential and transform lives.

2.20   On the academic side, students complete module evaluations via their VLE system, there is a student voice focus group, mid-term progress reviews, and feedback reporting on the College's response to their comments.

2.21   In terms of professional support, all students have access to the College's Careers Team, and guest speakers from professions relating to the students' programme come to the College to facilitate sessions on working in the modern world. Students whom the team met value this external input and recognise its impact on their activities in the workplace.

2.22   The students' Personal Tutor meets with all students individually to discuss their plans for progression at the end of the programme, and also provides workshops on preparing for presentations and job interviews.

2.23   The team finds that the College has appropriate systems, policies, processes and procedures in place designed to support students and enable them to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The design would meet the Expectation.

2.24   The team met and discussed with staff and students the support available, and examined paperwork relating to this support. The team also considered the students' reviews, and examination of reports.

2.25   The team found that each student receives intensive and academic support and feedback from the teaching staff, as well as pastoral and professional support to help them to achieve their potential. This is valued by students and is effective in enabling their progression. The student-centred ethos and support, which enhances the students' learning experience, is **good practice**.

2.26   The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation B4 and that the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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.

Findings

2.27   The College has a Student Voice Coordinator on the HNC/D in Sports and Exercise who has sole responsibility for representing the higher education provision. Any issues, complaints or compliments the students have are fed up to course managers by the Student Voice Coordinator. The good rapport existing between staff and students enables strong informal communication to take place consistently throughout the experience of students at the College, from programme design to work experience and progression to graduation. Formal student engagement at the College takes place through module evaluation forms via the VLE, Student Voice focus groups and mid-term progress reviews, allowing the student body to provide feedback and improve student experience.

2.28   It is likely that the Expectation would be met, as the College engages with students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience, mainly on an informal basis.

2.29   The team triangulated evidence provided by the College, including a student submission, with meetings held during the visit.

2.30   Students find communication with staff accessible and reliable, through an email service to which staff are quick to respond. The College staff are actively focused on improving the student experience and incorporating the views of students into progressing the higher education provision through continuous informal feedback, and increasing formal platforms. Student surveys completed by higher education students are discussed at meetings between the student representative and course leaders. The students praised bespoke training sessions given by guest lecturers, which they stated are integral to the programme, stating that they would like more of these in the future, which was then listened to and implemented by course leaders.

2.31   There is no formal student representative strategy in place at the College. Students are not represented at a senior level on College-wide committees. However, the team found that senior staff are aware of this. The Student Voice Coordinator received no formal training as a student representative, but due to the good rapport between students and staff, the Coordinator manages to communicate concerns and suggestions effectively between the programme team and the cohort. In view of the proposed expansion of the higher education provision at the College, the team **recommends** that the College develops and implements a formal system for student representation and involvement in deliberative committees, which enhances its role as a partner in learning.

2.32   The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation B5, with the associated level of risk being moderate due to the recommendation given.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Moderate

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.

Findings

2.33　Higher education course staff at the College design assessment content within a framework provided by Pearson. Students receive detailed assignment briefs, mapping learning outcomes against assessment criteria, outlining responsibilities within each task. Staff go through the assignment briefs and their expectations of the students at the beginning of each unit, ensuring that students gain a full understanding of how they can achieve the requirements of the award.

2.34　The College would be likely to meet the Expectation, as the process of assessment design at the College is equitable, valid and reliable, adhering to Pearson standards.

2.35　The team met students and staff at the College to clarify assessment processes and procedures. External verifier reports, internal verifier meeting minutes and documentation provided were analysed to review the College against the Expectation.

2.36　The design and development of assessments on the HNC/D in Sports and Exercise, undertaken by course leaders, follows clear processes aligning to Pearson standards. Staff are supported by the College through Assessment Boards, which outline roles and responsibilities of individuals responsible for programme content. The Vocational Centre Handbook clarifies assessment policy and procedure, ensuring standards of assessment are consistent, transparent and in line with Pearson requirements. The external verifier has isolated assessment standardisation as an area of improvement for the College, stating that robust cross-standardisation and marking is required to ensure a consistency of outcomes. It was also suggested that feedback must be consistent in appearance, using a template, to ensure consistency for every member of staff and student. In response to this, staff now internally verify and moderate the practice of assessment, ensuring a consistency and stability. Students are provided with continuous informal feedback from course staff during units within the College, and receive formal feedback from work placement providers through the work placement officer. This industry feedback enhances the employability of students, but is not formally incorporated into their grade. The team recognises that the College has actively responded to external verifier feedback in relation to assessment processes and affirms the steps taken to make sure that improvements to internal moderation and marking are continued.

2.37　The team finds that the College is likely to meet Expectation B6, as secure and improving practices are in place, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation:　Likely to meet
Level of risk:　Low

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

Findings

2.38   The College works with Pearson, its awarding organisation, in the process of monitoring its higher education provision. Pearson appoints an external verifier who works closely with the internal verifier assigned by the College. Reports from the external verifier and meetings held between both are considered in programme development and staff practice.

2.39   The College would be likely to meet the Expectation. Staff respond to external verifier reports and actively engage with the process of internal and external moderation to improve learning opportunities and academic standards.

2.40   Meetings held during the visit confirmed the previous examination carried out by the team, that the College makes use of external verifiers.

2.41   The Vocational Centre Handbook outlines the responsibilities and role of the internal verifier and internal verification policies and procedures, and how these are integrated and aligned with external verifier practice. The team found that the College actively engages with external verifier reports at Senior Management Forum meetings and actions them accordingly, improving areas of concern raised within the document. However, members of the student body are not present at these formal, senior meetings, and the process of reaction to external reports is not presented to the student body for consideration and input. Therefore, the team **recommends** that the College clarifies the process for using external verifier reports to enhance provision and involve students in their consideration.

2.42   In practice, the College engages with external verifiers and through a system of internal verification and moderation, incorporating external advice operated by Pearson. Therefore the College is likely to meet Expectation B7 with a low associated level of risk.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

Findings

2.43   At the end of this academic year, the College will hold a systematic review of its higher education provision. The programme will also undergo the annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan that is executed among the rest of the College's provision. The College has conducted lesson observations focusing on assessing the maintenance of academic standards. Staff incorporate feedback gathered by students from module evaluation forms into the process of monitoring and reviewing the HNC/D programme.

2.44   Systems in place at the College would allow Expectation B8 to be met.

2.45   The team scrutinised the evidence and documentation provided, reviewing practice at the College through meetings held during the visit.

2.46   The College includes its higher education provision within its SAR, enabling staff to review the effectiveness of the course and opportunities for improvement. Student feedback, both informally and formally through module feedback forms and continuous discussion, is also incorporated in the review of programmes at the College. Outcomes of these internal review practices are formalised and fed into the Senior Management Forum and then to the Board of Governors for approval before any action is taken.

2.47   Due to evidence of moderation processes and polices existing at the College, the team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation B8, with an associated risk level of low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

Findings

2.48   The College has in place policies and procedures for handling academic appeals and complaints, and these are detailed on the College website and higher education VLE. Students are also introduced to the policies as part of their introductory sessions at the beginning of the year. The staged approach aims to resolve any complaints informally and recommends speaking initially to tutors or senior staff. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, there is a formal procedure leading to the possibility of a final internal appeal to the Chair of the Governing Body. If the student wishes to take the appeal or the complaint further, the final appeal can be made to the awarding organisation. The College has also signed up to receive training for membership of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

2.49   The design meets the Expectation.

2.50   The team examined documents that set out the College's policies and procedures for complaints and appeals, and explored how these are made available to students. The team also held discussions with staff and students on the review visit in order to triangulate the evidence provided by the College.

2.51   The College's complaints policy is detailed, fair and accessible. Taking into account the small cohort of higher education students at the College, the team feels that the process is appropriate and should be able to deal with appeals and complaints effectively.

2.52   Based on the evidence provided and the discussions that took place during the review visit, the team concludes that Expectation B9 is likely to be met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
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.

Findings

2.53   The team considers that the College offers a thorough and comprehensive work placement scheme. Students have an option to experience a work placement at the end of the first year. Students whom the team met reported that they value this opportunity, and that it enables them to hone their workplace skills in preparation for their mandatory placement in the second year. During the first year students attend a workshop to inspire interest and gain advice on how to apply for a placement, including a template for the application letter.

2.54   Students are provided with a list of possible work placement opportunities which has been filtered for suitability for higher education students. They are also able to organise their own placement but this must be assessed by the College for a health and safety check and also the relevance of the work placement to their programme.

2.55   Students are provided with a placement pack which incorporates emergency precautions, job description and risk assessment, and the placement is discussed with the College's Work Experience Coordinator. Before the placement students complete a College form to reveal any possible issues, which is then shared with the confirmed provider. At the placement the employer delivers a health and safety induction.

2.56   Students are also supplied with a debrief form which enables the College to learn from the students' experiences, and an impact form which details the degree of student development during the placement which is then discussed with placement and teaching staff. Through this, the team identified the effective contribution of the management of work placements to the student's work experience.

2.57   The team found that the design meets the Expectation.

2.58   The team discussed the College's processes and plans for managing work-based learning with senior staff, the staff responsible for the placements and students. The team also asked students about their work experience, and read the literature made available to staff and students in support of work experience and placements.

2.59   The work experience process is effective and the thorough management of work placements which supports both students and the placement providers is **good practice**.

2.60   The team concludes that the College is likely to meet Expectation B10 and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

Findings

2.61   The College does not offer any postgraduate research programmes.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.62   In reaching its positive judgement the team matched the findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA in December 2014.

2.63   Of the 10 applicable Expectations for this judgement area all are likely to be met with a low level of risk, with the exception of Expectations B1 and B5 where the level of risk is moderate.

2.64   There are four recommendations associated with this judgement area.

2.65   The team makes recommendations under Expectations B1, B5 and B7. Under B1 two recommendations relate to the need for a formal process that enables the involvement of external expertise in the design and development of programmes and the need to verify course material formally. Under Expectation B5 the recommendation focuses on the need for a formal system of student representation and involvement in deliberative committees, and under Expectation B7 the recommendation relates to the need to clarify the process for using external examiner reports to enhance provision.

2.66   The team identifies two areas of good practice. The first, under Expectation B4, relates to the student-centred ethos of the College, and the second relates to the thorough management of work placements.

2.67   The team makes one affirmation, under Expectation B6, which acknowledges the steps taken by the College to make improvements to internal moderation and marking.

2.68   The team concludes that the policies and procedures at New College Pontefract **are likely to meet** UK expectations in the quality of the student learning opportunities.

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.

Findings

3.1 Much of the information offered to the current students was by word of mouth because it was the first year of offering the programme and most students were existing students of the College. The College provided information for potential students by internal promotion which included class visits, posters and direct questionnaires. The College also visited local schools to discuss the programme. The information offered is detailed and informative and the College is currently planning to develop detailed information for a wider audience for next year's students. Information received by students during their studies is clear and accessible and enables them to participate fully in their course. Information is checked and verified by the course team and the College management.

3.2 The team finds that the design meets the Expectation.

3.3 The team tested the Expectation by discussing with staff and students their experiences of the initial year and plans for future years, plus examination of paperwork relating to the admissions policy documentation.

3.4 The process works in practice and the changes planned for next year will add to the effectiveness. These include the development of Level 4 taster days for Level 3 students to facilitate transition, and the increase in external publicity to widen recruitment outside of the College.

3.5 On the basis of the evidence provided, the College has policies and procedures in place that ensure that the information it produces for both internal and external audiences is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The team concludes that the College is likely to meet the Expectation under Part C and that the associated risks are low.

Expectation: Likely to meet
Level of risk: Low

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

3.6   In reaching its positive judgement the team matched the findings against the criteria set out in the *Guidance for Providers Undergoing Initial Review*, published by QAA in December 2014.

3.7   The College produces information for its students and stakeholders about the higher education it offers that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.8   The team concludes that the approach taken to information about learning opportunities at New College Pontefract **is likely to meet** UK expectations.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers.

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* (FHEQIS).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.