Higher Education Review of Newham College of Further Education

October 2015

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Newham College of Further Education. The review took place from 20 to 22 October 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Fazal Dad
- Emeritus Professor Andrew Downton
- Dr Sandra Summers (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Newham College of Further Education 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, 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 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing Newham College of Further Education the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability and Digital Literacy,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)[4] 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/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Newham College of Further Education

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Newham College of Further Education.

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

Good practice

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

- The comprehensive and responsive support for student feedback (Expectation B3).
- The strong commitment to supporting academic staff development to enrich the student learning experience (Expectation B3).
- The detailed assessment processes and their systematic use by teaching staff and students (Expectation B6).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Newham College of Further Education

By April 2016:

- ensure that its Public Information Policy and Procedures are up to date and fully implemented (Expectation C).

By September 2016:

- ensure that student representation is fully embedded in its activities and committees (Expectation B5).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Newham College of Further Education is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The work being undertaken to improve student retention, progression and achievement (Expectation B3).
- The work being undertaken to strengthen the student voice by the embedding of 'You Said, We Did' mechanisms (Expectation B5).

Theme: Student Employability

Newham College of Further Education outlines its commitment to developing the employability and work readiness of students through its Higher Education Strategic Plan 2013-16, which focuses on employer-engagement activities, particularly at curriculum level, and supporting them in obtaining and gaining high quality employment opportunities. The College has well-established employer links to support and enable student participation at employability events. These include employers presenting to students to raise awareness of the competitiveness of graduate recruitment processes.

Students are able to access a range of employability materials via the virtual learning environment (VLE). Resources including CV templates, practice interview questions, and ways to structure answers are available as downloadable Employability Guides. Students are encouraged to attend recruitment fairs, which are held regularly all over London. This allows students to meet employers, have their CV checked and listen to a range of employer presentations.

The College is currently developing ways to include employers in the delivery and development of the curriculum and courses, recognising that this is an area for improvement.

The College offers high quality employability support to all students in a wide variety of ways. All students are able to access support in a setting that suits them: one-to-one appointments; group workshops; or though accessing online resources. A range of employers are involved in supporting employability initiatives, ensuring feedback and information is current and relevant. The College employs a specialist 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) employability coordinator, to provide employability support across all higher education courses and for up to two years after they have completed their programme.

Students are able to access one-to-one guidance sessions, which enable them to reflect on their own personal skills and attributes, and express them in a way that demonstrates to the employer that they would be suitable for the role in question. The College works with external organisations that support employability initiatives. Activities include CV surgeries and mock interviews with feedback. Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining Higher Education Review.

About Newham College of Further Education

Newham College of Further Education (the College) is a large general college in the Borough of Newham, east London. There are two main campuses - East Ham and Stratford - and six local neighbourhood and specialist-learning centres. Newham College University Centre (NUC) is the higher education faculty of the College; it offers a programme of high quality higher education courses.

The College's mission is to provide learning, skills and enterprise services, which are highly responsive to individual, employer and community demand; enable achievement and progression for all at every stage; and stimulate new demand and greater success through innovation. In the College's Higher Education Strategy, the rationale for the mission is as follows.

- Providing excellent opportunities for students who might otherwise not be able to successfully access high quality higher education, owing to barriers such as cost, location, lack of a suitable course, or lack of support or cultural capital.
- Offering students the opportunity to study higher education within a small-scale and inclusive community, supported by the resources of a large college.

- Enabling the development of the individual, the local and wider community, and the economy.
- Providing ladders of opportunity within the College from entry level, through level 3 to level 7.

At the time of the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) carried out by QAA in March 2011, two programmes were in scope: Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) programmes, and a foundation degree in Business, both of which were delivered in partnership with the University of East London. These programmes are no longer running with the University of East London, due to the University no longer offering these programmes through partnership arrangements. The PCET programmes have since been offered in collaboration with the University of Westminster Teacher Education Consortium. However, the University of Westminster has taken the decision to stop offering this programme, as it no longer fits with its mission. The current cohort of learners will remain with the University of Westminster until they complete in June 2016. All new learners from September 2015 will become part of the Canterbury Christ Church University Consortium, which will enable the College to continue offering these programmes.

At the time of the review the following programmes were in scope.

- Open University
  - BA/BS (Hons) Counselling Studies
  - BA/BSc (Hons) Combined Studies
  - Level 0 Preparatory Year
  - BA (Hons) Business and Management
  - BSc (Hons) Psychology
  - BSc (Hons) Child and Adolescent Psychology
- University of Westminster (Year 2 only for 2015-16) and Canterbury Christ Church University (Year 1 from September 2015)
  - Diploma in Education and Training
  - Professional Graduate Certificate in Education

The College has also signed a memorandum of cooperation with Canterbury Christ Church University for the delivery of a University Diploma in Teaching English or Mathematics, but the College is not currently offering these programmes.

Since September 2012 the majority of higher education provision has been delivered from a dedicated, separate, refurbished centre at the Stratford Campus, although the PCET programme is delivered at the East Ham campus. The College has undergone major organisational changes since the last review within NUC, and across the College, in 2013-14. In 2015 a new Principal and senior leadership team were appointed.

The previous IQER report included three areas of good practice and eight desirable recommendations. The review team considered the progress made by the College in implementing the recommendations, and found that they have all been satisfactorily addressed. The review team also found that progression of the areas of good practice had been undertaken.

Explanation of the findings about Newham College of Further Education

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/or 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's awards are validated by The Open University (undergraduate degrees) and the University of Westminster (PCET) respectively, using their published processes. At the time of the review, the College had just completed the franchising of the PCET from Canterbury Christ Church University, with effect for new entrants from September 2015 to replace the University of Westminster, which has withdrawn from this provision with effect for new entrants from September 2015.

1.2   Overall responsibility for the academic standards of the College's higher education provision is retained by its degree-awarding bodies.

1.3   In the case of Open University (OU) programmes, responsibility for management, development and quality assurance is a shared role. The College maintains academic standards through appropriate programme delivery procedures, and programme specifications provide the guidance for teaching, learning and assessment of students at the appropriate level.

1.4   For University of Westminster programmes, the College adheres to process, policies and procedures set out in the University's CertEd/PGCE Course Handbook, Learning and Teaching Strategy, Collaborations Handbook and the Academic Regulations.

The University of Westminster provides templates to develop programme specifications and other course documents.

1.5   The mapping of qualifications to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) is the responsibility of the awarding bodies. The FHEQ is mapped at programme level using a Regulatory Framework Document 300 Credit Framework (RFD300), which states that programme aims and outcomes must 'reflect the requirements of the Regulatory Framework, national benchmark statements, and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*'. RFD300 specifies the positioning of qualifications, award titles and outcomes in accordance with the FHEQ. The College is supported by OU staff during the development stages of qualifications to ensure standards are met.

1.6   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A1 to be met.

1.7   The review team scrutinised the College's processes, and their effectiveness in maintaining academic standards, through consideration of quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports, programme documentation and meetings with relevant staff and students.

1.8   Managers and teaching staff have a clear understanding of the FHEQ and its implications for course design, delivery and assessment.

1.9   The FHEQ, learning outcomes and credit framework are explained to students in the Student Handbook; programme course handbooks and module guides provide detailed programme and module learning outcomes.

1.10   Students confirmed that the academic credit of individual modules or units and intended learning outcomes are clearly communicated through a number of channels, including during induction, with module lecturers, information on the VLE, and within programme documentation.

1.11   The awarding bodies have overall responsibility for ensuring programmes take into account relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. All higher education programmes offered by the College are aligned, informed by and mapped against Subject Benchmark Statements, where applicable, during approval.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.13   The College operates within the prescribed regulations set out by its awarding bodies, the OU, University of Westminster and Canterbury Christ Church University. Each of these sets of regulations makes clear the frameworks and procedures that ensure the academic standards of awards and qualifications are met.

1.14   The College Higher Education Board has overarching responsibility for all the College Higher Education programmes and is chaired by the College Deputy Principal. The Board is supported by the Academic and Professional Development Group who are responsible for academic running of Higher Education programmes.

1.15   Assessment boards are conducted for all higher education programmes to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications within the relevant academic frameworks and regulations. These formal meetings consider students' achievement and academic progression and all marks are confirmed.

1.16   The Boards of Studies group consists of teaching staff and student representatives to review course delivery and reports to the Academic and Professional Development Group.

1.17   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.18   The review team scrutinised the College's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided in documented quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports, and meetings with relevant staff and students.

1.19   Regulations are systematically and consistently applied to secure academic standards. The College's higher education provision is regularly monitored, evaluated and supported by well-established templates and processes, and benefits significantly from its excellent relationships with its awarding bodies.

1.20   The College has very clear guidance on the division of responsibilities for academic governance and management between the College and its awarding body and organisation. Staff demonstrated a shared understanding of academic regulations between staff and students.

1.21   Academic regulations are available on the higher education VLE for staff and students. Key elements of the academic regulations, such as regulations on achievement, extenuating circumstances, academic offences and referencing requirements, are outlined to students during their induction. They are further reinforced by their personal tutors and programmes teams during the initial weeks of each programme of study.

1.22   The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met. The associated risk is low because the College operates within a transparent and comprehensive academic framework to govern the delivery of academic credit and qualifications on behalf of its awarding bodies.

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

1.23   Definitive records of all awards are retained by the awarding bodies and copies are also stored at the College and available to students and staff through programme specifications and module definitions on the College VLE. Programme learning outcomes are listed in course guides and module learning outcomes are specified in module guides and mapped against programme learning outcomes in programme specifications and module guides.

1.24   Assessments are verified against specified module and programme learning outcomes using the College's internal verification procedure and moderated according to the College's and the awarding bodies' external examining processes.

1.25   For students on OU programmes, their achievement is recorded in the College database which is used to generate award transcripts and diploma supplements. Award certificates are supplied by the awarding body. In the case of the PCET, student records are maintained by the awarding body and it provides both transcripts and award certificates.

1.26   The College maintains student records of achievement, programme specifications and examiner reports permanently, in accordance with its published data retention schedule.

1.27   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A2.2 to be met.

1.28   The team reviewed programme specifications, module definitions, course and module guides, and example transcripts, and confirmed the internal verification and external examining and moderation processes in meetings with senior and teaching staff, as well as partner representatives.

1.29   In its meetings with senior staff and students the review team were able to verify that the definitive documents are available to staff and students on the VLE, through programme specifications and module definitions. Learning outcomes are specified in the module guides, are clear to students and mapped against defined programme outcomes.

1.30   Students whom the review team met confirmed that they had full access to all information about their programme and modules and understood the learning outcomes, and methods and criteria for assessment. The College's website, VLE and samples of handbooks provided to students confirm that the definitive documents are available and serve as a definitive reference point.

1.31   Teaching staff and external partners confirmed that assessments are verified against the specifications and appropriately moderated by the awarding bodies.

1.32   Students confirm that they receive results and updated transcripts at the end of each module. Certificates are awarded by the validating University and records are kept securely on the College database.

1.33   The review team concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College follows appropriate processes, which are validated by its awarding bodies.

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

1.34 Academic responsibility for College approval of draft programmes lies with the College Higher Education Board, which reports to the College Governors and to Academic Standards and Performance Committee.

1.35 Proposals for new higher education provision are derived from the College's mission and Higher Education Strategy to offer an increasing range of higher education opportunities in the local area and are made to the Academic and Professional Development Group, through the completion of the Course Approval Form. Programme teams, which include a Curriculum Development Manager, are appointed once initial approval has been obtained from the validating university, and work with support from the OU Quality and Partnerships Manager and a staff academic reviewer to prepare a template for programme approval and revalidation. Training for programme development teams is provided by the College in-house, and supported by the validating universities. The College's Regulatory Framework specifies that programmes should demonstrate external reference points including relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, European reference points, national qualifications frameworks, and where appropriate, requirements of PSRBs and employers.

1.36 The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.37 The review team considered the College's regulatory framework, committee terms of reference and minutes of meetings of the Higher Education Board and Academic and Professional Development group. The team discussed with the College Principal, senior and academic staff at the College, and with the validating universities' partnership managers, how new programmes were conceived, developed and validated in combination with the College's partners.

1.38 New undergraduate programmes are developed for validation according to the College's Higher Education Strategy and strategy plan, and confirmed by the College Executive and Corporation. In meetings with senior and teaching staff, the review team confirmed that College staff are fully cognisant of the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB accreditation expectations and take full account of these in developing new and modified undergraduate programmes.

1.39 The College's PCET provision is franchised from the partner universities, primarily to provide a training route for its own academic staff, with additional students recruited externally. The team was able to confirm through discussion with link tutors at the previous and new PCET validating bodies, and with students and academic staff, that a very smooth transition of oversight was achieved both for continuing and new PCET students.

1.40 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has a well-defined higher education development strategy, clear programme development policies which are being followed by staff engaged in programme development, and effective external oversight.

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

1.41   The College operates according to its awarding bodies' assessment regulations, using its own regulatory framework for credit level descriptors and award at Levels 4 to 7. Programme learning outcomes identified in programme specifications are mapped against module learning outcomes using a module map and defined in detail in module definitions. Details of all assessments and marking criteria are provided in module guides and PCET year guides. The College is responsible for setting, marking, moderation and feedback of all assessment of undergraduate degrees, but setting and moderating of assessments is a shared responsibility for the PCET, and is localised at College level using assignment writing workshops attended by partner representatives. The terms of reference for Assessment Boards make clear that the Board is responsible for confirming progression and award results, applying the standards specified in the College's regulatory framework.

1.42   External examiners attend assessment boards and their reports demonstrate that they engage energetically, commenting on module content and assessments sent to them for review, confirming overall academic standards and reviewing student scripts submitted to them.

1.43   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A3.2 to be met.

1.44   The review team considered a range of evidence, including module and course handbooks; assessment briefs and examples of moderated coursework and marked exams; external examiners' reports and validation documents; and met staff responsible for assessment and oversight, and students to test whether this Expectation was met.

1.45   In its meeting with teaching staff, the review team confirmed that they were aware of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements and how these were used in developing programme and module specifications. Staff confirmed that the assessments they design are reviewed and verified each year before being set. Following student submission, marks awarded are first moderated and then sent to the external examiner for further review before being presented to programme exam boards, which confirm standards and marks and also provide feedback both to lecturers and students. Any significant changes to the validated assessment tasks require approval by the partner, although pedagogic development and exchange of good assessment practice are encouraged and have led to increasing diversity of assessment formats. Students that the team met are very satisfied with all aspects of their assessment and the feedback provided by academic staff.

1.46   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low because programme assessment is well defined and carefully verified, moderated and monitored.

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

1.47   The College reviews its undergraduate programmes using the OU's validation/revalidation process at no more than five-year intervals, and also periodically undergoes an institutional revalidation, most recently in January 2013. Similarly, validation/revalidation of the PCET follows Westminster academic regulations, collaborations handbook and quality assurance and enhancement handbook. Following a validation or revalidation, any conditions and recommendations specified are addressed and reported to the validating partner. The PCET is also subject to Ofsted review, last undertaken in 2014.

1.48   Annual monitoring reports for each programme are submitted together with an integrated report by the College annually to the OU, and include key performance data, programme evaluations for each separate programme, external examiner reports and responses, student feedback, staff information, programme revisions and an action plan, including feedback on progress responding to the previous year's action plan and responses to this. Annual monitoring of the PCET is coordinated in a single annual review covering all its franchised partners by the University of Westminster. The report mainly describes overall provision, but with specific commentary on distinctive issues or good practice at each participating College.

1.49   Following Westminster's decision to terminate provision of this programme, the College is continuing to teach out the second year to remaining students registered with Westminster, and has completed a full institutional and programme validation for a replacement PCET franchised from Canterbury Christ Church University, for which the initial cohort of first year students had just started their course at the time of this review.

1.50   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A3.3 to be met.

1.51   The review team scrutinised the College's monitoring and review processes and their effectiveness through consideration of the validating universities' documentation, internal papers and minutes of College committees, and through meetings with staff, students and staff from validating partners.

1.52   In its meeting with the College's senior staff and partner link tutors, the review team confirmed that the College maintained regular, clear and extensive communications with its awarding bodies with a clear distinction between day-to-day business, managed through link tutors, and strategic and more formal quality assurance elements, which are managed through the College and partner committee reporting structures. Academic staff at the College are aware of the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and confirmed that all changes to assessment processes have to be agreed with the module moderator and external examiner. These are submitted to the partner for approval by the programme curriculum manager, with changes constituting more than 5 per cent of a module triggering the formal module reapproval process.

1.53   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low because the validating institutions' monitoring and review processes have been scrupulously followed.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.54　　The College's new course approval processes are set out in the partnership agreements between the College and OU, University of Westminster and Canterbury Christ Church University.

1.55　　The OU appoints a process panel member for developing and redeveloping a programme, and external examiners and academic reviewers are also involved in the process to provide specialist security. External examiners are appointed by the OU for a period of four years and these experts attend Assessment Board meetings. The external examiner reports and feedback are seen by the College as a critical part of the quality improvement process.

1.56　　The PCET course is monitored under the agreed University of Westminster academic standards procedures and annual monitoring is undertaken by the Westminster Business School Cognate Group. Course Leaders and the Westminster Consortium Programme Leader attend the Cognate Group meetings and contribute to the subgroup processes of scrutiny.

1.57　　The policies and processes of the College would allow Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.58　　The review team scrutinised a range of relevant documentation including policies and procedures relating to external examining and external examiner reports. Meetings were held with senior staff and teaching staff to understand how external examiner and external adviser input is used to maintain standards.

1.59　　For OU programmes, the programme teams consult with relevant experts in developing and redeveloping a programme. For the development of a new programme, a process panel member is appointed by the OU and at redevelopment, the expertise of external examiners and academic reviewers is drawn upon to provide externality scrutiny. An academic reviewer is also appointed by the OU to support the programme team in the delivery and review of the course.

1.60　　The University of Westminster Cognate Group examines the evidence in line with its monitoring requirements, and all action plans will be reported through the its monitoring procedures. It is the responsibility of the University of Westminster Business School to ensure that all the action plans are satisfactorily completed.

1.61　　External examiners are recognised as an essential element of the verification of assessment, their confirmation of assessment at the assessment board at the end of the academic year confirms the assessment standard of the programme. External examiner reports confirm that the academic standards achieved by the students are appropriate for the award and level of study.

1.62   All higher education delivery within the College is overseen by the higher education Board, which includes representatives from the awarding bodies and an independent expert.

1.63   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because systems in place enable issues to be identified and resolved promptly.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.65   All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and the level of associated risk is judged to be low.

1.66   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or 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, Development and Approval*

Findings

2.1 The College's Higher Education Strategy Implementation Plan indicates that it expects to significantly increase student numbers over the period 2013-16 and that the increased numbers will be accommodated through the validation of a range of new undergraduate programmes and through the restructuring and revalidation of existing programmes and pathways. It has recently validated a Year 0 programme to provide increased flexibility in student recruitment, which had its first intake in academic year 2014-15.

2.2 The College's new programme proposals are developed by programme teams appointed by the Academic and Professional Development Group, using the expertise of its curriculum and management staff and the outside expertise offered by the validating university's academic reviewers and subject experts to ensure that programmes are consistent with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Procedures for development are set out by the validating partner in its handbook for validated awards, and the College uses the partners' templates. Once finalised, programme proposals are validated through the partner.

2.3 OU revalidations operate to a clearly specified timetable, defining internal documentation development and an internal mock validation as well as specifying deadlines for documentation submission, the validation event and completion of responses to conditions.

2.4 The College's PCET course has, until 2015-16, been franchised from The University of Westminster. It was developed and managed by Westminster and delivered onsite and by a number of other Colleges. In 2014, the PCET was revalidated, with representation on the review panel of each of the delivery Colleges, with no conditions or recommendations specific to the College. In summer 2015, the College completed the franchising of an alternative PCET from Canterbury Christ Church University, to replace that offered by The University of Westminster, as noted under Expectation A3.1. At the time of the review, the College is teaching out the second year of the Westminster PCET to students recruited in 2014 and has just started delivering the first year of the replacement PCET franchised from CCCU to the first cohort of first-year students.

2.5 The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B1 to be met.

2.6 The review team considered a range of documentary evidence, including the minutes of meetings of senior management, the governing body, College committees, and the activities of programme development teams, together with validation reports and meetings with senior staff, academic staff and partner staff.

2.7 In a meeting with the Principal, the review team confirmed that the number of undergraduate programmes being developed is in line with the College's mission and Higher Education Strategy, and with government policy to focus on higher-level skills. Higher

education provision is becoming more central to the College, with more degree pathways. Links are being developed with other local universities, business and industry.

2.8   In their meeting with the review team, academic staff described a number of new course developments and validations with which they had been involved including English for Academic Purposes, Sociology and Psychology. College managers confirmed that a robust capital bid process was in place to resource new programmes, and market research was also undertaken to ensure that only viable courses were launched.

2.9   The review team concludes that the Expectation B1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has well defined programme development policies, which are applied through the Academic and Professional Development Group, and underwritten by the comprehensive programme validation processes of the College's partner universities. However, the team also concludes that there was little evidence of student involvement in programme development, and this has led to a recommendation in Expectation B5.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.10   The College's ethos is of inclusion and widening participation and its admissions processes are designed to support this mission. There is a formal admissions policy. Initial information is provided to enquirers and applicants through UCAS, the College prospectus, and its website, and is supported by regular information coffee evenings providing opportunities to visit the College and meet staff and Student Engagement Officers (SEOs). Applicants come through UCAS or directly to the College, when they will be provided with advice. Applicants for an OU degree are invited to information evenings. Applicants for PCET are put in contact with the programme leader.

2.11   For OU awards, applicants need 80 UCAS points or to pass diagnostics tests. For the Counselling degree applicants are interviewed to assess suitability. A year 0 programme was validated in 2014, and has been successfully introduced.

2.12   Applicant transition guidance has been improved by formalising the diagnostic assessments and interview processes and these are recommended for all applicants, to help them prepare for higher education. The initial assessment enables the course team to recognise the strengths and weaknesses, and to provide resources, pre-course, to address those. The College is continuing to develop its admission processes to enable students to meet the expectations of higher education courses.

2.13   Applicants for the PCET programmes are required to undertake an initial assessment of professional literacy and communication skills and require a degree or Level 3 vocational qualification plus GCSE maths and English, a teaching placement, a Disclosure and Barring Service check, and a mentor for the programme.

2.14   The College provides a range of financial and welfare advice and disability support for applicants and students, and some emergency funds are available. Two funds are available to assist student with financial hardship: an Emergency Fund and the Learning Revolution Trust.

2.15   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B2 to be met.

2.16   The review team tested the operation of the College's recruitment and admissions policies and procedures by reviewing the admission arrangements by talking to students, admissions and academic staff. The review team examined the UCAS and College websites and Prospectus. The team reviewed the diagnostic tests, decision form and interview record.

2.17   The College publishes clear information about its admission requirements on its website. Students with whom the review team met were satisfied that they had the appropriate information to make an informed choice. The College has a clear admission policy and staff are aware about the procedures for admission and their responsibilities.

2.18   Information is available to potential students on UCAS, the College website and prospectus, supported by informational coffee mornings. Marketing of programmes is aimed at the local community with adverts placed on local buses and the Docklands Light Railway.

2.19   The College is reviewing its admission criteria as part of its strategy to improve retention and has improved its transition guidance for students by outlining the reasonable expectations of what is expected of students on programmes to consider and how best to prepare themselves for higher education study. It has taken steps to improve retention, especially at Level 1, with extended induction, and regular monitoring of students' progress, using a red/amber/green system of checks. A year 0 programme has recently been introduced for those students not yet ready for Level 1 and is aimed at providing students with the knowledge and skills to succeed at Level 4. Included in this validation are a series of diagnostic tests which provide a filter mechanism for the admission of students onto degree courses, the Level 0 programme or a suitable alternative programme.

2.20   Students who apply directly to the College are offered a meeting with an academic staff member and a diagnostic test. Students are then offered advice and guidance on preparing for their programme. The Programme Director makes the decision on admissions, and the formal offer is made through the Admissions Officer. An appeal process against an admissions decision is in place whereby the Senior Tutor for Student Experience will review the decision, and if necessary, referred to the Director for a final decision.

2.21   Students with whom the review team met are generally satisfied with the advice and support they receive through the application process and on induction, although they identified some updates required to course handbooks. The College has reviewed its enrolment processes and, since March 2015, students on higher education programmes have a separate enrolment process from further education students at the College, which has improved the initial student experience. The College has recently appointed a Student Finance, Welfare and Engagement Coordinator who assists students with financial issues at the admissions stage or who are experiencing financial difficulties.

2.22   The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has processes in place and follows them.

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

2.23   The College has a number of systems in place to ensure that teaching and learning are of a consistently high quality. These include the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the Higher Education Teaching, Research and Scholarly Strategy 2015-18, Annual monitoring and oversight by the Higher Education Board. A programme of staff development activities, including the observation of teaching and learning, focused on higher education teaching is both supportive and developmental.

2.24   The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy underpins its mission to regenerate the local area as an exemplary area for enterprise, ambition, and social and economic inclusion o be achieved through opportunities for individuals to develop skills, student engagement, satisfaction, retention, achievement and employability. It supports students' enjoyment of their chosen programmes of study, their emergence as independent learners and ethical global citizens with graduate level transferable and employability skills. The strategy also encourages a curriculum that is inclusive and responsive to the changing needs of a diverse student population through the provision of relevant and challenging programmes of study, modules and classes. It supports progression at all levels of study, including the transition into higher education and from each undergraduate level to the next and to graduation.

2.25   Lecturers are encouraged to make good use of technology to develop digital literacy skills and to ensure student success beyond the classroom. There is a strong emphasis on variety in assessment, with constructive and timely feedback to students so they can improve their work. The academic and professional development of staff is encouraged, informed by appropriate reflection, professional practice and scholarship of learning and teaching.

2.26   Teaching and Learning on the PCET programmes is in accordance with the University of Westminster's teaching and learning strategy. At induction, Year 1 students are given sessions on classroom and behaviour management; observations of teaching; e-technology and how to use the University's library and learning resources. Year 2 students are given induction sessions on research methods, how to support learners' language needs, strategies to integrate numeracy into teaching and higher level academic writing and critical thinking skills. At the end of each year, all students are invited to attend the Research Conference at which, for the last two years, two students have presented their research findings. In the afternoon students can attend the University of Westminster's Symposium on Learning and Teaching.

2.27   The College has robust systems in place to share good practice in teaching and assessment and this was evident when the team met staff. It has operated a programme of observation of teaching and learning over the past two years which is supportive and developmental and has a higher education focus. This incorporates an individual action plan which identifies the professional development and scholarly activities which staff wish to undertake. These observations are not graded but those few staff who are found to have significant areas for development in their observation have been re-observed following

detailed feedback. Staff new to the College may also be encouraged to observe a peer observation.

2.28   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B3 to be met.

2.29   The review team scrutinised documentation, processes and policies and met staff and students to determine the ways in which the College enhances the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner and enhance their analytical, critical and creative thinking.

2.30   Students benefit from an inclusive range support and guidance, ranging from coffee mornings, dyslexia support to assistance with additional tutorial support. Students confirmed that they receive outstanding tutor support in the classroom. This enables all students to receive timely, high quality and detailed feedback which supports further learning opportunities. The review team considers the comprehensive and responsive support for student feedback to be **good practice**.

2.31   There is a wide range of opportunities for students to provide feedback on all aspects of learning and teaching. However the main vehicle for students to seek change is the Board of Studies. The College has systems and processes in place to ensure engagement of higher education students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. However, the review team concludes that this is not fully embedded in the College which leads to a recommendation in Expectation B5.

2.32   Staff outlined the procedures for allocating and monitoring work placements and students confirmed that these work effectively. Students praised the exceptional support provided by their tutors, the guidance available for those with disabilities and the provision of information about their programme, through the website, handbooks and the induction process.

2.33   In considering retention statistics over the previous three years the team notes a trend of low student completion rates from 2012-13 to 2014-15; discussions with senior staff and teaching staff confirmed that the College have recognised this issue and are taking appropriate steps to address this area of concern. Staff spoke of the positive impact of the recently established SEOs and the move to more holistic support strategies. For example, the introduction of a traffic light system to identify students' at risk to provide appropriate and relevant support at an early stage. The review team **affirms** the work being undertaken to improve student retention, progression and achievement.

2.34   The College's approach to research and scholarship are underpinned by the higher education Teaching, Research and Scholarly Strategy 2015-18. Lecturers delivering the BSc (Hons) Psychology programmes are encouraged to be research active. All other lecturers are encouraged to undertake scholarly activity appropriate to their disciplines to maintain professional currency and this may embrace a range of pursuits, including professional practice (as on Counselling programmes), research (for example, in Counselling or English for Academic Purposes), following interests in the use of learning technologies to develop pedagogy or scholarship to inform teaching and learning. Two members of staff are also External Examiners at other institutions. Four members of staff are currently Fellows of the HEA and one is a Senior Fellow and more are developing their applications. All members of staff are encouraged to pursue professional recognition. Examples of opportunities for professional and scholarly development were cited by many members of staff the review team met.

2.35   The College has a clear process for staff induction and it is evident that the College's peer observation scheme is a successful and established mechanism for sharing

good practice. The review team considers the strong commitment to supporting academic staff development to enrich the student learning experience to be **good practice**.

2.36   The review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning are appropriate and robustly executed with two examples of good practice identified.

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

2.37   Student support is widespread and well embedded in the College and includes, SEOs and, a Disability & Learning Needs Officer and, for students on placements a Higher Education Placement Officer. All students have a dedicated personal tutor.

2.38   The Learning Resource Centre (the Flex) provides extensive resources for students. All students are also provided with a MyDay account which includes a college email account, cloud storage and the opportunity to download Microsoft office software onto their home computers. The College employs e-Learning Advisers to assist lecturers in understanding and deploying the technology. The role of E-Learning Advisers is to provide professional support to all academic staff to develop up-to-date e-learning resources for the delivery of course materials using both current and innovative ILCT.

2.39   The development of the VLE has been focused on enhancing teaching, learning and assessment and the student experience by providing course and module information to students and staff, teaching and learning resources, a forum for e-communication and student feedback and a mechanism for the submission, grading and return of student work.

2.40   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B4 to be met.

2.41   The review team considered a range of documentary evidence and met staff and students to investigate the approach the College takes to ensuring that students develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

2.42   The College provides good employability support for students at all levels and for up to two years after they have completed their programme. Support is targeted and varied to suit the needs of the student and is appropriate for the area of employment they wish to go into. Support is offered in a wide variety of ways: one-to-one guidance; group workshops and presentations; employer presentations and activities; mentoring and help with finding placements and internships. Presentations and workshops cover: CV writing; how to complete an application form; how to find a placement or internship; mock interviews with employers; using a business social networking site for networking and job searching.

2.43   Support is offered in a wide variety of ways. Employers currently involved with employability initiatives include, Barclays, Accenture, Tate and Lyle and Enterprise Rent-a-Car.

2.44   The College attracts many students whose English is a second language and therefore provides support in English for academic and professional purposes to further develop formal written English skills.

2.45   Students studying Counselling degrees receive dedicated placement support from the Placement Coordinator. There is a Placement Handbook for Students, an Organisation Placement Handbook and further guidance is available to students on the VLE.

2.46   Support for learners with additional needs is prioritised. A dedicated part-time Disability & Learning Needs Officer is available to assist students with all aspects of Disabled Students' Allowance applications and follow up requirements. Links with external agencies including Student Finance England, Needs Assessment Centres, Support

Agencies and other stakeholders help sustain excellent communication pathways to enhance student support.

2.47   The College provides multiple opportunities for new and existing students to undertake an initial diagnostic test for dyslexia. Teaching staff have access to information pertaining to students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties to ensures fair access to teaching and learning. Coursework coversheets submitted by dyslexic learners ensure a fair marking policy. Examination concessions are rigorously implemented to safeguard students' interests.

2.48   All students enrolled undertake an induction programme that introduces them to their programme, how higher education functions and the resources available for them to use.

2.49   The review team concludes that Expectation B4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because systems in place enable issues to be identified and resolved promptly.

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

2.50   The College has recently appointed a Student Finance, Welfare and Engagement Coordinator (SFWEC) and three SEOs (who are recent College graduates), to improve student engagement. Student representatives are elected from each course and a Higher Education Student Officer representing all the higher education students is also elected.

2.51   Student feedback is collected both informally and formally. Students welcome the fact that tutors and course managers are approachable and that they can raise issues informally with them. The Student Engagement Team provide a helpful and informal resource which students use to answer student questions and provide general support and can receive up to 70 queries a day and meet 25-30 students. The SFWEC and SEOs meet regularly with senior managers of NUC to review issues, progress and agree actions on student engagement issues.

2.52   Formal feedback is collected by questionnaires, end of module evaluation forms, end-of-year evaluations and an induction survey for OU programmes. Formal feedback is also given by student representatives to the following Committees: Boards of Study; Higher Education Academic Board Student Experience Group and meetings with student representatives and focus groups. The College holds a Student Engagement meeting, where several concerns were raised and taken up by staff members. Students also contribute to feedback during teaching observations and during the lecturer interviewing process when candidates micro-teach to students. Student feedback is sent to the interviewing panel.

2.53   The College is working to increase the visibility of student representatives. Training has been offered with limited take-up. A student engagement action plan has been developed that the College is using to develop its student engagement. The Student Charter is currently being reviewed, with feedback sought from students.

2.54   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B5 to be met.

2.55   The review team reviewed the student engagement team minutes, the module evaluation, induction feedback questionnaire, Board of Combined Studies minutes, student representative meeting minutes, and the student engagement plan. The review team examined feedback on student work and the feedback to students in 'We said, They did'. The team met SEOs, senior staff, support staff and students.

2.56   The College has a variety of mechanisms for engaging with its higher education student body. Students attend several College formal committees. The Student Charter is contained within the Student Handbook and sets out the two-way commitment between staff and students. The Student Charter is currently being reviewed with appropriate input from students.

2.57   Students whom the team met reported that the recent appointment of the SEOs had been helpful and enabled them to seek advice and ask questions in an informal way. Students were clear on the system of student representation for their courses and were satisfied that this worked well. The College is exploring the possibility of communicating directly with students by text message.

2.58   The College provides training to assist student representatives to be trained in their role. Student representatives meet regularly to discuss, among other things, current issues in the College, communication with students and training needs.

2.59   The College collects feedback from students through a variety of means including informal feedback through the SEOs and through formal questionnaires such as end of module, yearly evaluations and induction surveys. The College has approached the collecting of this feedback in different ways with differing measures of success. The SEOs now supervise students to fill in feedback forms electronically which has helped to improve the collection process.

2.60   The review team found good progress in reviewing and updating the method of completing the NSS-equivalent end-of-year survey. Online surveys are more efficient to analyse, but have a low participation rate, so the College are introducing supervised online participation. Students confirm that they are regularly asked for feedback and encouraged to return survey forms. Student representatives found the Boards of Studies helpful in addressing their concerns.

2.61   The review team noted that the College committees terms of reference make provision for students to be in attendance at meetings, although it was reported that students are full members of committees. It is unclear whether students were represented on a recent revalidation meeting or are involved in course and programme design. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure that student representation is fully embedded in its activities and committees.

2.62   The College has recognised that it needs to close the feedback loop by ensuring that students are aware of how their voice has been listened to and acted upon. The review team **affirms** the work being undertaken to strengthen the student voice by the embedding of 'You Said, We Did' mechanisms.

2.63   The review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has procedures and processes in place.

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

2.64   The College's regulations prescribe processes for accreditation of prior learning (APL), assessment policies, examination policies, examination room arrangements, Internal moderation, external examining, achievement of awards, and conduct of assessment boards.

2.65   Assessment information for each programme is communicated to students in module and programme handbooks, and in programme specifications as well as on the VLE. Individual module guides contain clear summaries of assessments, which are typically based predominantly on coursework and involve an initial preparatory formative assignment followed by a substantive summative assessment. The College's assessment policies provide generic descriptions of the amount of assessment required for different module credit sizes, the types of assessment that can be used, generic grade descriptors and level descriptors, and set out the stages for the preparation and delivery of assessment, including internal preparation and verification prior to delivery.

2.66   Assignment briefs provide detailed and specific expectations and detailed marking criteria. The module tutor is responsible for providing the module verification panel with a schedule of assignments and, following completion of moderation, a report based on all module assessment elements is prepared using a College template.

2.67   The College's VLE provides the College's default mechanism for the submission, marking and feedback of all module assessments to students, except where alternatives are necessary to accommodate non-standard module delivery. The VLE also provides both formative opportunities for students to understand issues of plagiarism and collusion and summative checks on all submitted coursework to detect plagiarism.

2.68   The policies and procedures of the College would enable Expectation B6 to be met.

2.69   The review team met senior and academic staff, and students. The team also reviewed the College's regulatory framework documents, programme specifications, module handbooks, assessment briefs, external examiners' reports, programme handbooks, and each university's assessment policies.

2.70   At its meeting with senior staff and link tutors from the validating universities, the review team was able to confirm that the College works closely with its external examiners. Curriculum managers are responsible for oversight and signing off responses to external examiners' reports. The College's quality department is responsible for logging receipt of reports and responses, identifying any wider issues, monitoring that these have been addressed and, where appropriate, feed them into the College's quality improvement plan. At a strategic level, reports are made to the Deputy Principal and thence to the executive team and Corporation on any issues that arise from external examiner reports and other aspects of annual monitoring.

2.71   Teaching staff at the College gave a very detailed description of their marking and moderation processes and how these are mapped against learning outcomes at their meeting with the review team. They explained that any changes proposed to module assessment processes are first agreed with the moderator and external examiner and then go through the curriculum manager to the OU for approval. Nevertheless, opportunity exists for enhancement and development through College staff initiatives: examples were given of three modules where more diversified and staged module assessment regimes had been agreed with the university and are now in operation.

2.72   Students whom the review team met were full of praise for all aspects of their assessment, stating that it was thorough, structured and consistent, with excellent speedy and detailed feedback, which had been enhanced by the shift to all-electronic submission and feedback using the VLE in the last two years. Students also commended the approachability and support provided by all their teachers, including regularly providing detailed one-to-one feedback and support on demand.

2.73   The review team considers the detailed assessment processes and their systematic use by teaching staff and students to be **good practice**.

2.74   The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has developed and embedded a comprehensive set of assessment processes, with clear partner oversight, and evidence of examples where enhancement has been applied to improve the diversity and range of types of student assessment.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.75   The nomination and appointment of external examiners falls within the remit of the regulations and processes of the awarding bodies.

2.76   The College views the external examiners input and feedback to be critical in the role of quality assurance. External examiners are provided with student outcomes, a sample of student work, course documents and moderation documents, and a module report written by the lecturer. It is the policy of NUC that teaching staff whose programmes are being considered by the board are present to hear these external examiners' comments first hand as well as giving immediate feedback to these. Feedback by externals and staff are recorded in the minutes of the assessment board, and used to review course delivery and as part of the annual monitoring process.

2.77   All external examiners, as part of their normal duties, provide a written yearly report using the appropriate form. Copies of this report are provided to all staff teaching on the programme, made available to students on the VLE, considered by the Board of Studies, and evaluated and responded to as part of the annual monitoring process.

2.78   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B7 to be met.

2.79   The review team examined documentation, policies and procedures and met staff and students to establish the scrupulous use of external examiners.

2.80   The University of Westminster programmes are reviewed by three external examiners, two of whom have specialist expertise and one of whom specialises in generic teacher education. Any areas for development are commented on and actions are drawn up by the University's Programme Leader. Although external examiners reports do not generally make reference to individual partners, if specific issues are raised about the delivery at Newham College these would be reported to the Consortium Programme Leader and to the Assessment Board where comments are formally recorded. Any issues would also form part of the action plan and would be reported to the University of Westminster Business School Annual Monitoring Review Committee.

2.81   For the OU, the subject Curriculum Manager is responsible for liaising with the external examiner. This includes providing the external examiner with relevant information regarding the programme, the assignment briefs and confirming the dates of visits.

2.82   The review team explored students' familiarity with the role of external examiners and their reports. Students confirm that external examiners' reports are available on the VLE. In addition, external examiners are discussed at the Board of Studies and at the Higher Education Board to discuss further quality enhancement actions.

2.83   All annual external examiner reports are received by the College quality department from the awarding bodies and is subsequently forwarded to the appropriate Curriculum Managers. The College quality department has oversight of progress being made and this is monitored through the curriculum area quality improvement plans for closure.

2.84   The review team concludes that Expectation B7 is met. The associated level of risk is low because there are robust systems in place to ensure the scrupulous use of external

examiners and that each qualification is examined against the appropriate level of the FHEQ.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.85   The College's processes for the internal stages of undergraduate programme review are defined by each partner's revalidation timetable, starting with team meetings six months before the partner's approval or revalidation event, and planning and review of the documents required for the revalidation, including background, critical appraisal, student handbook, programme and module specifications and updating of the programme team's CVs. Completeness of all documentation is verified internally through a mock validation held by the College team at least a month before the formal revalidation event. PCET programme arrangements, including course committee meetings with student representation, are managed by the franchising partner as a consortium, with representation on the programme committee for each College. Input from the College is combined with other partners into a single composite annual monitoring report.

2.86   Following the University of Westminster decision to discontinue its PCET programme at the end of 2014-15 academic year, it has put in place, in consultation with its partner colleges, the closure, transfer and teach-out processes as necessary to enable each college partner to support its completing students and continue to satisfy local PCET demand through an alternative partnership.

2.87   Annual monitoring reports for each undergraduate programme are submitted together with an integrated report by the College annually to the OU and include key performance data, programme evaluations for each separate programme, external examiner reports and responses to student feedback, staff information and updates, programme revisions and an action plan, including feedback on progress responding to the previous year's action plan and responses to this.

2.88   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B8 to be met.

2.89   The review team scrutinised the College's monitoring and review processes and their effectiveness through consideration of the validating universities' documentation, internal papers and minutes of College committees, and through meetings with staff, students and partner representatives.

2.90   In its meeting with the College's senior staff and partner link tutors, the review team confirmed that the College maintains regular, clear and extensive communications with its awarding bodies, and distinguishes between day-to-day business, managed through the quality and partnerships manager and academic reviewers and annual and periodic review, managed through the College and partner committee reporting structures.

2.91   The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College maintains a full range of day-to-day, annual and periodic internal review processes for its programmes, which feed into the validating university's formal oversight, approval and revalidation procedures.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*

Findings

2.92   The College has separate appeals and complaints procedures which are drawn to the attention of students in the Student Handbook, on the VLE and at induction. Appeals on academic decisions may only be made where there are grounds for believing that procedural irregularities have occurred, or where the College's own regulatory framework has not been appropriately followed. The appeals process is clearly set out in the procedures and involves a four-stage process ranging from informal resolution to formal panel consideration. Should the appeal not be resolved at this stage it is referred to the validating university under their procedures.

2.93   There is also a four-stage College complaints process commencing with informal resolution and progressing through to formal consideration by the Higher Education Board. Failure to resolve the complaint at that level will then proceed to be considered under the validating university's complaints procedure.

2.94   Information about complaints and appeals in relation to the PCET programme is in the student handbook.

2.95   The Higher Education Board annually reviews the number and type of academic appeals made and the handling of these appeals, revising procedures as required.

2.96   Students are informed of the complaints process at induction in the Student Handbook and on the VLE. Complaints are handled centrally by the complaints coordinator. The complaint is logged, and the director and curriculum manager are informed. Complaints are reported to the Executive and reviewed in the monitoring process. A summary of complaints received, and the outcomes, is reported to the Executive Board.

2.97   There is also a policy for complaints about admissions. Students are informed of the process through the induction process and the Student Handbook.

2.98   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B9 to be met.

2.99   The review team tested the College's complaints and appeals processes by reviewing the procedures and records kept, the monitoring of complaints and appeals processes and outcomes reported to College committees, and through discussion with the staff and students.

2.100   Students met by the team were generally aware that information on how to make a complaint or appeal was available in their Student Handbook, on the VLE and covered at induction. Students are encouraged to raise matters at the informal stage with SEOs, tutors and curriculum managers. Students are kept informed at each stage.

2.101   The College keeps detailed records on each appeal and formal complaint that is made which sets out the action taken on each stage. This includes a monthly report to the Executive Board on complaints and both a quarterly and annual report to the Corporation Board.

2.102   The review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met. The associated level of risk is low because there are processes in place and these are followed in practice.

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

2.103   The College sets out clearly its expectations for placements in handbooks for students and organisations. These set out the responsibilities of the College, students and the placements organisations. The College has a dedicated Placement Officer.

2.104   The College articulates its commitment to developing the employability and work readiness of its students through its Higher Education Strategy Plan and associated devolved planning processes. In developing programmes designed to reflect local need, the College adopts a strategic approach to delivering learning opportunities with employers for their students.

2.105   For the PCET course students must be in a role where they are teaching between three to five hours per week. The College helps with finding alternative teaching hours.

2.106   For Counselling courses students must complete supervised placements of 100 hours to register as a member of the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP). The College provides additional support for one year after graduation to allow students to complete their hours.

2.107   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B10 to be met.

2.108   The review team scrutinised the evidence in the self-evaluation document, and handbooks. In addition, the review team held a series of meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, and students, and one telephone conversation with an employer to discuss the organisation and management of work-based learning.

2.109   Work placements are monitored by programme teams and forms part of the assessment for PCET and counselling programmes.

2.110   For Counselling programmes, students' work placement arrangements are set out in the student, and organisation's placement handbooks. Within the placement handbook there are detailed arrangements regarding policies and placement procedures. The placement agreement between the College, the placement organisation and the student are clearly set out in the agreement form so as to ensure that there are adequate safeguards against financial impropriety or conflicts of interest that might compromise academic standards or the quality of the placement and learning opportunities for students. Placement risk assessments are also carried out by students and the Placement Coordinator to ensure students are placed in a safe environment. Furthermore, students are required to register as student members of the BACP and adhere to the ethical and professional standards of the association and enhance requirements for the DBS. To ensure that students are suitable to engage in a placement, a Readiness to Practice panel assesses the student against a checklist of criteria of both academic and practice-based skill.

2.111   The College carries out due diligence procedures and the responsibilities for students and employers are noted in the handbook. Placement organisations are required to sign and return an agreement which set out the responsibilities between the placement

organisation, university centre, student and supervisor. The College keeps a number of records which are subject to a formal agreement with placement organisations. These records are clearly noted in the students' and organisations' handbooks.

2.112   The evidence from staff and awarding bodies confirmed that arrangements for the oversight and management of work placement learning makes a positive contribution to the students' learning experience.

2.113   The review team concludes that Expectation B10 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the arrangements in place to monitor work placements are robust and well understood by staff.

Expectation: Met
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.

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.114   The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.115   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.

2.116   All applicable Expectations have been met and the associated level of risk is judged to be low in each case. One recommendation is made covering one Expectation, two affirmations are made covering two Expectations, and three features of good practice are made covering two Expectations.

2.117   The recommendation arising from Expectation B5 indicates that the College should ensure that student representation is fully embedded in its activities and committees. The affirmations confirm the steps being taken to improve student retention, progression and achievement, and the work being undertaken to strengthen the student voice by the embedding of You Said, We Did mechanisms. The features of good practice confirm the comprehensive and responsive support for student feedback, the strong commitment to supporting academic staff developments to enrich the student learning experience, and the detailed assessment process and their systematic use by teaching staff and students.

2.118   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College has a Public Information Policy and Procedures, which sets out the responsibilities for public information, including academic programmes, handbooks, finance, awards, entry requirements and marketing. This Policy aims to assure the accuracy of public information.

3.2 The College provides information for prospective students on the website, in its prospectus, through UCAS and with wider information sets also available on the website. In addition, the College provides face-to-face information through its admission team and academics at open coffee evenings. The accuracy of information is checked by senior College staff, and by the awarding bodies before publication, and is the responsibility of marketing.

3.3 Information for current students is provided through course and module handbooks, programme specifications and module definitions, in the student handbook and on the VLE. External examiner reports and minutes of the Board of Studies are available on the VLE. Changes to timetables are notified to students by email.

3.4 Students are provided with a degree transcript after the completion of each exam board to record their progress, and a diploma supplement at the end of their programme. The validating universities provide the formal degree certificate confirming the award obtained. All graduates are invited to a NUC graduation ceremony.

3.5 The College maintains all records of collaborative provision, committees and boards, appeals and complaints, APL, (re)validation records and annual monitoring reports, according to its data retention protocol.

3.6 The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation C to be met.

3.7 The review team reviewed a wide range of information published by the College including the website, the UCAS site, student handbook, course guides, external examiner reports and minutes from the Board of Studies. The review team also met staff and students.

3.8 The Public Information Policy covers information published in electronic or printed form which refers to academic programmes, services, corporate strategy, policies, and press and media communication. It clearly sets out the College's approach to maintaining the accuracy of published material including the relevant officers responsible for signing it off. In meetings with staff, the review team concludes that the existence of the policy was not widely known and the review team heard inconsistent methods for the maintenance of the published information and sign-off procedures. The review team **recommends** that, by April 2016, the College ensure that its Public Information Policy and Procedures are up to date and fully implemented.

3.9 Information for current students about their courses is provided through handbooks, the student portal, VLE and other websites, as well as the increasing use of social media to

facilitate communication between students and the College. The College is investigating the use of text messaging to facilitate rapid communication with students. The VLE is a main source of information for students, containing the programme and course information, assessment details and is used to provide feedback to students on assessed work. Students were complimentary about the amount of helpful information published on the VLE. The College has a VLE forum which includes curriculum managers, teachers and SEOs to regularly discuss items such as VLE functionality and student communication.

3.10   Students whom the review team met confirmed that they are aware of where to find information about their course and module handbooks, module descriptions, student handbook and the VLE. The students confirm that they receive their degree transcripts at the end of each module. The review team found no evidence of major inaccuracies in the College's published material and students met by the team are generally satisfied with the reliability and accuracy of the information they received as part of the enquiry application and admission process although some students commented on minor inconsistencies and errors.

3.11   The review team concludes that Expectation C is met. The associated level of risk is moderate because of weaknesses in the lack of clarity about responsibilities and inconsistent adherence or awareness of the policy.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

3.12   In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.13   The Expectation is met but the level of associated risk is moderate. There is one recommendation that the College ensure that its Public Information Policy and Procedures are up to date and fully implemented.

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

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   The College's approach to enhancement of student learning opportunities is informed by its Higher Education Strategy 2013-16, and particularly the progressive roll-out of the Higher Education Strategic Plan. Underpinning specific improvements and developments is evidence provided by the sector, including through The Student Engagement Partnership and the HEA, external examiner and assessor feedback, student feedback, and outputs from the College's annual monitoring quality cycle.

4.2   Examples of strategy-led enhancements since 2013 include upgrades to the VLE, College wireless internet access, email and eBooks activity; extension of staff development, particularly in terms of support for research, scholarly activity and professional registration; improved retention and student outcomes through enhancements to student support; better monitoring of student engagement; and deployment and embedding of the College's employability strategy. They also include increased student engagement, satisfaction and sense of belonging through improvements to student representation such as enhanced personal tutoring and personal development planning, appointment of SEOs, and the establishment and dissemination of a College student charter.

4.3   Other initiatives that have improved student outcomes include the introduction in 2014-15 of a Level 0 programme to provide an alternative entry route for applicants not yet qualified for direct entry to programmes, and revisions to the admissions process to provide more rigorous interviews and diagnostic testing, to ensure that all students admitted are suitably supported and capable of achieving their award.

4.4   The policies and procedures of the College would allow the Expectation on enhancement to be met.

4.5   The team reviewed the statements made in the documentation submitted to QAA as part of this review, and the supporting documentary evidence for these and talked to the College Principal, senior staff, academic and support staff, and students to determine whether the College is taking deliberate and systematic steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.6   The College's approach to enhancement is embedded in the priorities of the Higher Education Strategy and its implementation plan and timetable, and embraces a wide definition of the student experience, and includes improving the College estate, online resources, admissions arrangements, the range of cocurricular student activities and student support, and employability support, as well as student learning opportunities. This focus on broader enrichment of the student experience recognises that the College has to address the often poor local facilities available to students at home and includes both conventional elements such as rich IT support on campus, and more unconventional support such as free breakfasts for students to encourage timely attendance.

4.7   In its meetings with senior and teaching staff, the review team was able to confirm that all staff who teach on the higher education programmes are employed exclusively on higher education contract terms with time explicitly allocated for staff development, scholarship and research, and objectives now being set for all staff to aim for FHEA status. Staff were able to provide the team with several examples of learning enhancements

developed from good practice identified within the College, such as improved student participation resulting from the introduction of social media as an adjunct to the VLE, extension of software licences to allow student use at home, the recent development of a 'You said, We did' campaign to close the feedback loop back to students, and the recruitment of three SEOs to coordinate feedback from students and improve student-staff liaison. Staff also gave examples of how their scholarship and research, which is contractually specified as one day per week, informs their teaching, and has recently been supported by the establishment of research labs which also enhance student project opportunities.

4.8   Students are very satisfied with most aspects of their experience, teaching and learning opportunities, and where issues have been identified, feedback channels are effective, and issues are often already on the College senior management radar and identified within the Higher Education Strategy, and are dealt with responsively.

4.9   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because there is evidence that the College is taking deliberate and systematic steps to follow the objectives set out in its Higher Education Strategy and the impact of these objectives is enhanced through the evidence and good practice collected from students, through annual monitoring, and from external independent sources.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.10   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.

4.11   The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.12   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The College outlines its commitment to developing the employability and work-readiness of students through its Higher Education Strategic Plan 2013-16, which focuses on employer engagement activities, particularly at curriculum level and supporting them in obtaining and gaining high quality employment opportunities.

5.2   The College has well established employer links to support and enable student participation at employability events. These include employers presenting to students to raise awareness of the competitiveness of graduate recruitment processes.

5.3   Students benefit from subject-specific guest speakers who are invited to present aspects of employability and career choices post-graduation to students. Most recently, a range of psychology professionals working with the British Psychological Society have visited psychology lectures providing students with the opportunity to find out about their experiences of working in the field. When visiting speakers attend or employers deliver workshops, student feedback is collected and suggestions and comments are noted to make improvements for the future.

5.4   The College is focusing on developing the personal skills of students through innovative new learning models involving real work environments. These activities are available to all students, benefiting higher education, including experience within real work environments developing enterprising skills.

5.5   The College encourages all higher education students to participate in placements and internships. For example, for Business and Management, Psychology and the Combined Studies courses it is not essential that students complete a work placement, although it is encouraged. This is especially the case with business students. Organisations such as STEP and Career Interactive talk to students about the best way to approach getting a placement or internship.

5.6   Students are able to access a range of employability materials via the VLE. Resources including CV templates, practice interview questions and ways to structure answers are available as downloadable Employability Guides.

5.7   Students are encouraged to attend recruitment fairs which are held regularly all over London. This allows the students to meet employers, have their CV checked and listen to a range of employer presentations. Students are offered the opportunity to travel with the employability coordinator and visit the exhibition together, ensuring they get the most out of the experience. For example, students attended a recent Summer Graduate Fair at Olympia and the Careers Group Graduate Fair at the University of London and there are further events which the Internship and Employability Coordinator advertises to students and offers to accompany them.

5.8   The College is currently developing ways to include employers in the delivery and development of the curriculum and courses recognising that this is an area for improvement.

5.9   Organisations that have offered placements to Counselling students are requested to complete a questionnaire asking for feedback on a student's level of theoretical knowledge when on placement. The Placements Coordinator continues to build strong relationships with placement organisations and their feedback and suggestions are taken into account when the course is developed further.

5.10　　The College offers high quality employability support to all students in a wide variety of ways. All students are able to access support in a setting that suits them such as one-to-one appointments; group workshops; or though accessing online resources. A range of employers are involved in supporting employability initiatives, ensuring feedback and information is current and relevant. The College employs a specialist 0.5 FTE employability coordinator, to provide employability support across all higher education courses and for up to two years after they have completed their programme.

5.11　　Many students are already in employment and have a vast array of work experiences. They are extremely employable but are unaware that their current work skills are transferable and can be expressed as graduate level employability skills. Students are able to access one-to-one support with creating a CV or completing an application form. During one-to-one guidance sessions students are able to reflect on their own personal skills and attributes and express them in a way which demonstrates to the employer that they would be suitable for the role in question. This is especially pertinent for students looking for a compulsory placement opportunity for the BA Counselling Studies, where 100 hours of placement experience is essential to achieve BACP accreditation as a counsellor.

5.12　　The College works with external organisations that support employability initiatives. Activities include CV surgeries and mock interviews with feedback. Working in partnership with The East London Business Alliance, the College has been able to offer students the opportunity to have their CV checked by graduate recruiters from organisations such as Accenture and HSBC. The College offers students work towards an employability award.

5.13　　The review team contacted one employer, who spoke highly of the effective communication and the breadth and diversity of engagement activities they undertake with the College. The team concludes that the College is innovative in its commitment to student employability and responsive to local needs.

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 30-33 of the Higher Education Review 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.