



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Norland College

October 2017

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Norland College. The review took place from 25 to 26 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Miss Sarah Riches
- Ms Suellen White
- Ms Alyson Bird.

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

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

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)² and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

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

- 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 is **commended**.

Good practice

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

- The comprehensive range of staff development opportunities and its positive impact on the student learning experience (Expectations B3 and Enhancement).
- The highly effective preparation of students for employment in the Early Years sector (Expectation B4).
- The effective integration of academic and personal support which enables students to successfully complete their studies (Expectation B4).
- The wide range of opportunities for students to engage effectively as partners and academic citizens in quality assurance and enhancement processes (Expectation B5 and Enhancement).
- The role and inclusive composition of the Assessment Scrutiny Panel in guaranteeing that assessment is equitable, valid and reliable (Expectation B6).
- The College-wide meticulous approach to annual monitoring which leads to comprehensive enhancement plans (Expectations B8 and Enhancement).
- The strategic and systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities resulting in a highly effective learning environment (Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By March 2018:

- formalise the internal procedures for the approval and reapproval of programmes including the involvement of independent external expertise (Expectations B1, B8 and A3.4)
- strengthen the processes for full and serious consideration of the external examiner's report and ensure that agreed actions have been completed (Expectations B7 and A3.4)
- revise the policies and procedures for applicant and student complaints to ensure the requirements of the collaborative agreement are met (Expectations B9 and B2)
- ensure that all policies relevant to prospective students are easily accessible on the College website (Expectations C and B2).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps being taken to improve learning resources (Expectation B4).

About the provider

Norland College Ltd was founded in 1892 by Emily Ward, a pioneer of childcare education in England. The College's mission reflects many of the founder's original ideas and is stated in its current Strategic Plan, the Sustainability and Transformation Framework: 'Norland's mission is to uphold and enhance our prestigious reputation and provide a bespoke early years higher education, training and consultancy, informed by cutting-edge research, and cultivate outstanding graduates with lifelong career opportunities, professional support and continuous learning.'

The mission is discharged primarily by providing a full-time academic course leading to a degree in Early Years Development and Learning validated by the University of Gloucestershire, and a bespoke concurrent diploma course (the Norland Diploma), which equips students with essential practical skills and placement experiences in the care and education of babies and young children.

The College also operates an employment agency to help its graduates find employment.

Norland College currently (2017) has 266 students enrolled, with an intake of 100 annually from 2017. There are 25 full-time academic staff, including 10 higher education teaching/management staff, five diploma lecturers, four placement staff, one teaching assistant and six academic support staff. Key programme management responsibilities are vested in the Principal, Vice-principal, and two programme leaders (one for the degree and one for the Diploma). The Principal is primarily concerned with strategic leadership and the operational management of the College, but is also engaged in teaching, and developing research at the College. The Vice-principal deputises for the Principal when necessary but also performs the functions carried out in a larger institution by the Registrar and Head of Academic Services. In total, there are 44 staff currently employed directly by the College. Additional functions such as counselling services, some IT services and funded student support are outsourced.

The College admits students to a single three-year honours degree validated by the University of Gloucestershire, which is taught alongside a diploma (mapped to level 3 occupational standards). The Norland Diploma is awarded by the College itself, and designed to give students additional practical training and work experience in the field.

A new Principal was appointed in July 2016.

The College has premises at York Place in Bath. To accommodate increased student numbers, new premises were secured on the south-west side of Bath. These new premises have become the main teaching site, with the York Place site housing administrative departments.

The College's first and most recent QAA review was a Review for Specific Course Designation in 2014. This identified eight features of good practice and made five desirable recommendations. The most recent Annual Monitoring Visit took place in January 2016 and concluded that Norland College was making commendable progress with the action plan arising from the 2014 review.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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 (FHEQ)* are met by:

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College has one Honours degree (BA (Hons) Early Years Development and Learning) which was validated by the University of Gloucestershire in 2013 and revalidated in 2016.

1.2 The setting of academic standards for higher education is the responsibility of the University and this is set out in the collaborative agreement. The agreement sets out the primary responsibilities of both the University and the College and states that the College must deliver the programme in accordance with the programme specification. The specification and any changes to it must be approved by the University.

1.3 The programme, and policies and procedures which support the delivery of the programme, are mapped against the relevant external UK and EU reference points, including the Quality Code; the FHEQ; Early Childhood Studies Subject Benchmark Statements 2007 and 2014; Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2007, 2012 and 2014; and SEEC Generic Descriptors 2003 and 2016.

1.4 The College described the Early Years Childhood Studies Subject Benchmark Statement as an important reference point at the validation of the degree in 2013 and the Statement is referred to in the BA Course Handbook. A mapping exercise was undertaken when the Subject Benchmark Statement was updated in 2014.

1.5 The College has a Guide to the Management of Quality and Academic Standards that sets out the process for using external references to assure standards. The induction of academic staff includes an introduction to the Quality Code, with specific reference to Part A. The learning and teaching approaches are designed to meet the objectives and outcomes of the programme and are set out in the College's Teaching and Learning Policy.

1.6 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.7 The review team tested the College's engagement with these reference points by inspecting documents referred to above and talking to staff. The programme specification clearly lists the intended learning outcomes of the award and the external points of reference used. The intended learning outcomes are mapped to each assessment within the modules. Senior staff referred to recent training given to staff on regulatory changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

1.8 The review team found the College's regulatory structure to be sound with appropriate consideration of the University's regulatory structure. Threshold academic standards are secured and thus the 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

1.9 The College recognises that the primary responsibility for academic standards resides with the University of Gloucestershire and is assured through the University's Academic Regulations. The College therefore uses the University's academic frameworks and regulations.

1.10 The College has a governance structure, overseen by a Board of Directors, which monitors the application of the University's regulations. The Academic Board has Terms of Reference which state that it is responsible for 'approving processes for the setting and maintaining of the threshold academic standards of the higher education awards delivered by the College'. The Programme Committee, which reports to the Academic Board, monitors the teaching and learning experiences, academic standards and the quality of the students' learning experiences. The College introduced a new Teaching and Learning Committee in September 2017 to share good practice. Award boards report into the Academic Board and are currently chaired by the University. Students are members of the academic committees at all levels, and at the Board of Directors.

1.11 The Principal of the College chairs the Academic Board which is the centre of the College's academic community and is responsible for all matters relating to academic standards. The academic team at the College is overseen by the Vice-principal, Head of Academic Services, and Registrar. The team includes BA and Diploma programme leaders and a Quality and Enhancement Manager. A summary of the management of academic standards and quality at the College is set out in the College's Guide to the Management of Quality and Academic Standards.

1.12 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team inspected documents relating to governance (structure, committee terms of reference and minutes from meetings) and reports (external examiner, annual monitoring and periodic review). They also explored the College's implementation of governance, frameworks and regulations with staff and students.

1.14 The College returns an annual monitoring report to the University and holds two Partnership Boards a year. Academic standards are further monitored through periodic reviews, an academic link tutor and through the deliberative committee structure (Programme Committee, Academic Board, Module Board of Examiners and Award Board). University representatives act as the Chair for the Module Board of Examiners and the Award Board of Examiners.

1.15 The responsibilities set out in the Collaborative Partnership Agreement clearly state that the provision must be operated within the University's Academic Regulations. Furthermore, the agreement sets out which functions are delegated to the College by the University within the academic framework.

1.16 The team considers the College to be effective in ensuring the application of the University's regulations through its governance structure and academic frameworks.

The review team concludes therefore that Expectation A2.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.17 The Academic Regulations, the Programme Handbook, module handbooks and the Programme Specification, taken together act as the definitive course documentation for the higher education programme delivered by the College. The Programme Handbook, which incorporates the Programme Specification, provides details of programme content, learning outcomes and relevant assessment criteria and makes explicit references to the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. Transcripts are produced by the College upon completion of studies; the University of Gloucestershire produces certificates. The transcript provides an overview of results for each component piece of assessment as well as aggregate marks. The procedures therefore allow the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team examined the effectiveness of maintaining definitive records for the programme of study through examining programme and module handbooks, the academic regulations and programme specification. They also met students, student representatives and staff to test the Expectation.

1.19 It is the responsibility of the awarding body to approve the definitive course documentation. The awarding body's validation, review and revalidation processes approve programme documentation for the College's higher education programme. The College is also required to seek approval from the University of Gloucestershire for any major modifications to the programme which may be required in between scheduled review and revalidation events. The College follows University of Gloucestershire's processes for this. The College maintains all versions of its programme documentation for 40 years.

1.20 Prior to seeking approval from the University of Gloucestershire, proposed changes to the programme are also considered and approved internally by the College, and in accordance with its own processes as outlined in its Course Definitive Documents Policy and Student Retention Policy. The review team noted that while the College confirmed that the Course Definitive Documents and Student Retention Policy is currently in use, this is not clear from the policy document itself.

1.21 Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for providing accurate programme documentation to students, and students were satisfied with the quality of the documentation provided by the College. Staff and students can access relevant course documentation through the College's virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.22 The review team found that the College has in place processes and procedures to allow them to maintain a definitive record of the programme and qualification that they teach, in collaboration with their degree-awarding body. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.23 The College follows the policies and procedures of its awarding body for the approval programmes as set out in the University's Academic Quality and Partnerships Handbook. The handbook is supplemented by the College's Guidance Notes - Validating New Programmes which details its expectations. Although Academic Board has defined responsibility for the (internal) approval and modification of programmes, which it exercises, the College does not have a documented set of procedures for the internal approval (or revalidation) of programmes prior to University approval processes.

1.24 Adherence to the University's procedures combined with the role of the College's Academic Board allows the Expectation to be met. However, the absence of documented internal procedures for programme approval and revalidation contributes to the recommendation under Expectation B1, paragraph 2.4.

1.25 The team explored how the College met the Expectation in practice by examining the University's requirements for programme approval, the College's guidance to programme teams, validation documents and reports, records of consultation with students and the external examiner, and minutes of Academic Board. The team also held meetings with staff, students, employers and recent graduates.

1.26 The BA programme was first approved by the University in 2013 and revalidated for a further five years in 2016 as part of the periodic review of the programme. The University confirmed that the revised programme met its Academic Regulations for Taught Awards and that all conditions had been fulfilled. External reference points were considered in the development of the revalidated programme; and students and the external examiner were consulted. The University's panel for the review and revalidation event included an external academic member. The panel made two recommendations about the content and structure of the BA programme, which the College has addressed by completing a major modification to the programme effective for new students from the 2017-18 academic year. The College consulted the external examiner as required by the University's procedures.

1.27 A process of curriculum mapping is used to ensure that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are delivered and assessed. The mapping of module learning outcomes to assessment criteria is set out in module handbooks.

1.28 The review team concludes that notwithstanding the absence of internal procedures for programme approval, the processes for programme approval ensure that the academic standards of the BA programme meet UK threshold standards and the standards set by the University. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.29 The University's Academic Regulations provide the framework for the design of programmes and modules. Learning outcomes are specified at programme and module level and approved by the University at the time of validation, revalidation or modification. The overall assessment strategy for the programme is set out in the programme specification. The assessment of programme learning outcomes is mapped by module. Module handbooks contain details of assessment tasks, assessment criteria and marking rubrics. The assessment process is coordinated by an Assessment Scrutiny Panel. The panel approves assignment briefs, assessment criteria and rubrics. The University's link tutor and the external examiner have oversight of the assessment process. These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

1.30 The review team explored how the Expectation is met in practice by considering the University's Academic Regulations, programme and module specifications, minutes of Assessment Scrutiny Panels and examination boards and external examiner reports, and by meeting with staff and students.

1.31 The external examiner confirms that the standards set are appropriate to the level of the award; they are comparable to awards at other institutions; students are well prepared for their assessments and achieve appropriate standards. Student achievement at module and qualification level is reviewed as part of the annual monitoring process and reported to Programme Committees and Academic Board. Trends are analysed, and corrective action taken where performance is out of line.

1.32 The Programme Handbook contains guidance on referencing and best academic practice and sets out the rules relating to academic misconduct. The external examiner has repeatedly raised concerns about the importance of accurate referencing (see also paragraphs 1.46 and 2.59 with associated recommendation. A small number of academic misconduct cases was reported to the 2017 Award Board. Actions to support students in adopting good academic practice include: the inclusion of a statement in Module Handbooks; the review of referencing lists as part of the assessment process; the inclusion of a full lecture in a first year Professional Development module; offering referencing clinics and encouragement for students to use plagiarism-detection software as a self-check tool.

1.33 The review team concludes that the College's arrangements for the assessment of learning outcomes ensure that UK threshold standards and the standards of its validating University are satisfied and therefore the Expectation is met, and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.34 The College engages with the University's requirements in respect of annual monitoring and periodic review of the BA programme as set out in the Academic Quality and Partnerships Handbook. Module-level reviews feed into the programme annual report, which in turn enables the completion of the University's Course Evaluation Form and Annual Partnership Review. Programmes are validated by the University for a defined period, usually five years, and then subject to a periodic review and revalidation. The BA programme was reviewed in 2016 and revalidated for a further five years. These processes enable the Expectation to be met.

1.35 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's processes by examining the procedures for programme monitoring and review; module reviews, annual reports and plans; minutes of the programme committee and Academic Board; feedback from the University; periodic review reports; and by meeting with staff and students.

1.36 Module leaders complete a detailed review after each presentation of the module. The template includes progress in completing previous action plans, the effectiveness of teaching, student performance and achievement, feedback from the external examiner and students, learning resource and student support, and an action plan. Module reviews are analysed at programme committees. They form the basis of the programme annual report prepared by the programme leader which is discussed at the programme committee and approved by Academic Board. The annual report contains a detailed analysis of student assessment data and achievement trends. The external examiner's report and the College's response to recommendations are also included. The University's monitoring processes include the completion of a self-assessment pro forma accompanied by supporting evidence. The College normally receives feedback from the University and any issues may be discussed at Partnership Board meetings. The review team concludes that College has robust processes for monitoring academic standards.

1.37 A periodic review of the BA programme was carried out in 2016 in accordance with the University's procedures. The College's submission included external examiner reports and responses and details of student retention, progression and module level achievement data. At the time of the review, the first intake of students to the new full-time degree were part way through their final year; it was not possible therefore to compare the final performance of students on the new programme with its predecessor programmes. The review team concludes that given the timing of the periodic review the College's responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards was addressed appropriately.

1.38 The review team concludes that the College processes for monitoring and reviewing programmes address whether UK threshold standards are achieved, and the standards of its validating University are being maintained and consequently the Expectation is met, and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.39 The University of Gloucestershire, as the awarding body, retains ultimate responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards. Therefore the College uses external and independent expertise to ensure threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved, and aligns to the University's policies and procedures on externality.

1.40 The current arrangements for programme approval, monitoring and review are ultimately the responsibility of the University. Its Academic Quality and Partnerships Handbook states that sources of externality include 'the involvement of suitably qualified academics from outside the University and, where appropriate, professional practitioners and/or employers in the University's course development, validation and review processes'. It also maintains guidance notes for validating new programmes that includes external consultation as part of the development process.

1.41 The College uses an external examiner, employed by the University as part of the process for setting and maintaining academic standards. External examiner duties include participation in programme monitoring and review, and within the assessment processes. The external examiner report feeds into the annual monitoring report and action plan, and module and award boards. It is also considered at the Programme Board and Academic Board. The College is responsible for ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to the feedback provided by the external examiner on the management and delivery of programmes. Previously the University responded to the external examiner, but the College has assumed this responsibility.

1.42 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

1.43 The review team looked at the external examiner reports, the corresponding responses and action plans for 2016-17, the validation report in 2013 and the periodic review report for 2016. They discussed the external examining process regarding processing, responding and actioning of the external examiner's annual report with staff. Other external factors, including the use of external consultants was also considered.

1.44 The review team found comprehensive evidence of consultation with the external examiner at the appropriate stages of the monitoring and review of the degree, and throughout the assessment process. This aligns with the University's and College's related policies.

1.45 A development team was established for the validation of the degree in 2013 which included a team of external consultants. Employers, external subject specialist academics and graduates were all consulted as part of the design process for the degree and this was highlighted as good practice in the QAA's most recent Specific Course Designation report in 2014. However, besides consultation with the external examiner, the team noted no external academic consideration in preparing for the periodic review and revalidation in 2016. While

the guidance refers to the inclusion of externality in the development of new programmes, the team thought this omission in the periodic review and revalidation was a weakness (see also paragraph 2.4).

1.46 The review team scrutinised the audit trail for responses to comments made by the external examiner in their 2016 and 2017 annual reports. They noted an ongoing issue raised by the external examiner regarding plagiarism and referencing mistakes, which was highlighted in the Academic Board minutes. An action requested by the Board to discuss the issue at the Standardisation meeting was not done. While acknowledging the external examiner's confirmation on the maintenance of threshold academic standards in the 2016 and 2017 annual reports, the team deemed there to be a weakness in the process for actioning issues highlighted by the external examiner (see also paragraph 2.59).

1.47 The review team considers the College makes effective use of external and independent expertise in meeting the requirements of its awarding body. However, weaknesses have been identified in the review and revalidation of the degree and in responding to issues raised by the external examiner during the assessment process. The review team therefore concludes that while Expectation A3.4 is met, the associated risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

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

1.50 The team's scrutiny of a wide range of evidence, and meetings with staff and students, led it to conclude that effective use is made of relevant subject and qualification benchmarks, in the development of programmes and their subsequent approval and monitoring. There is a weakness in responding effectively to some external examiner recommendations.

1.51 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body 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 complies with the University's policies and procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes as set out in the University's Academic Quality and Partnerships Handbook. Academic Board has institutional oversight of programme approval and reapproval. The College has built on the good practice in relation to programme approval identified by the team in the QAA Review for Specific Course Designation in 2014 by developing Guidance Notes - Validating New Programmes for programme development teams. The College's Guide to the Management of Quality and Standards does not specifically address internal processes for programme design, development and approval. While adherence to the University's policies and procedures for programme design, development and approval as supplemented with College guidance allows the Expectation to be met, the absence of formal documented internal procedures represents a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities and contributes to the recommendation in paragraph 2.4.

2.2 The review team explored how the College met the Expectation in practice by considering the University's policies and procedures, the College's Guidance Notes, documentation relating to the initial approval of the BA programme in 2012, its re-approval in 2016 and the major modification in 2017. The team also met staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.3 At the time of the programme's initial validation, the College established a large development team comprising senior College staff, academic and support managers, teaching staff, the placement coordinator, current and former students (known as Norlanders). Advice was received from three external academic consultants and a practitioner/employer. The College explained that in 2016 they had followed the University's requirements for periodic review and revalidation; students and the external examiner had been consulted and feedback from employers channelled through the Newly Qualified Nanny unit. A similar consultation process in line with University requirements was adopted for the major modification in 2017. The College did not consider undertaking wider consultation with the external academics at the time of developing its revised programme in 2016 for revalidation or in 2017 for the major modification. Proposed changes to the programme were discussed thoroughly internally at the Programme Committee and at Academic Board with excellent engagement by staff and students. However, these discussions lacked a broader external academic perspective. The University's Periodic Review and Revalidation Panel included an independent academic member; the panel met a group of current students.

2.4 The College has sound processes for the development, design and approval of programmes in line with the requirement of its awarding body. However, the absence of formally documented internal procedures that set out the requirements for consultation with the relevant academic community poses a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College formalise the

internal procedures for the approval and re-approval of programmes including the involvement of independent external expertise.

2.5 Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met but the recommendation to formalise internal procedures for the approval and re-approval of programmes is indicative of a moderate level of risk.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.6 The College is responsible for the recruitment, selection and admission of its own students, in line with its Collaborative Agreement with the awarding body. The College maintains an Admissions Policy which sets out the requirements for entry to the higher education programme at the College and which was approved by the College's Academic Board. Applicants apply to study at the College through UCAS. Social media is used to facilitate engagement with prospective candidates, applicants and offer holders, and in conjunction with the website, Open Days and Careers Fairs are used as part of recruitment activity and to provide information, advice and guidance to prospective students.

2.7 The College's admissions procedures are administered by a central admissions team. All suitable applicants are interviewed to judge their suitability to study the programme and to work with young children. The College requires all applicants (and then all students on an annual basis) to complete a declaration to inform the College of any potential safeguarding issues which may prevent the applicant (or student) from working with children. All lecturers are involved in undertaking interviews and the College makes use of standard interview questions and a standard scoring system to ensure equity of decision making. All outcome decisions are made by the Vice-principal, informed by the scored activity from the selection process described above. Records of the interview and the overall decision are retained, and successful applicants are issued with the Standard Terms and Conditions of Offer.

2.8 The review team tested the College's approach to recruitment, selection and admissions through meetings with senior staff, staff responsible for admissions and students. The review team also reviewed College documents relating to admissions, including the admissions policy and procedure, and information and guidance available on the website.

2.9 The College clearly outlines and understands its responsibilities in relation to admissions and the requirements of its degree-awarding body, and staff within the College undertaking admissions interviews are appropriately trained and supported by a mentor. UCAS training is also provided to those involved in the administration of the admissions process.

2.10 The College maintains a specific policy for appeals and complaints in relation to applications, which is referred to within the overarching Admissions Policy. The review team noted, however, that the Application Appeals and Complaints Policy did not include any information on the role of the degree-awarding body in considering appeals or complaints against admissions decisions, which is specified as a joint activity between the College and the degree-awarding body within the Collaborative Partnership Agreement with the University of Gloucestershire. This oversight in the College's policy contributes to the recommendation detailed in paragraph 2.70.

2.11 The College provides details of the academic and non-academic entry requirements, such as Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements and English

language requirements, on its website. The College's Admissions Policy, Application Appeals and Complaints Policy, Fitness Practice Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy are also available on the website. However, discussions with students and staff at the College revealed that both students and staff were unclear where these key policies were published on the College website; this contributes to the recommendation detailed in paragraph 3.5.

2.12 The review team concludes that the College has the appropriate processes and policies in place to allow for the fair and transparent recruitment, selection and admission of students. Therefore, this Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.13 Staff confirmed the College's ethos that individuals are required to take responsibility for their own personal development and that this is articulated in their job descriptions. They confirmed they were encouraged and supported to make use of the opportunities afforded through the College with respect to professional development, research and scholarly activity. An example cited was the two-day internal conference which staff attended, whereby they shared findings from their individual research projects. Besides internal events, a ring-fenced budget (2.6 per cent of overall staffing budget) is available to staff for attendance at conferences and applying to the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Staff can apply for funding for continuing professional development (CPD) activity, providing there is a benefit to the student experience. The College's Human Resources department maintains a staff development and scholarly activity log. Academic staff are also encouraged to apply for external examining appointments at other higher education institutions.

2.14 Prior to any new member of staff teaching on a higher education programme, their CV is sent to the University for approval in accordance with the validation agreement. The College has a policy on the induction of staff. It details that each member of staff is required to have at least two induction review meetings with their line manager and that lecturing staff must be qualified to (or working towards) at least one level above that which they are teaching. Students felt that staff were suitably trained and qualified. Students and employers both commented positively that academic staff kept abreast of current developments within the early years' sector. Each new member of staff is allocated a designated mentor who maintains oversight of the academic standards and quality of teaching, learning and assessment. At least once each term, in the first year, a new member of staff will be observed teaching by the Vice-principal Academic. The team therefore concludes that the comprehensive range of staff development opportunities and its positive impact on the student learning experience is **good practice**.

2.15 Students confirmed with the review team that lecturers provide interactive and engaging learning and teaching activities and actively seek feedback from them. The team found evidence of various examples where students' feedback, both formally and informally, had prompted improvements to their learning experience; examples cited by both staff and students included the review of IT, an improved connection between the BA and Diploma, and the 'Here to Hear' scheme.

2.16 The College has an Equal Opportunities policy and ensures that staff adapt teaching and learning resources to the individual needs of students, using the data contained within the student database. An Improving Progress Policy, and Personal and Academic Tutoring Policy, form a holistic approach to enabling student achievement and progress, particularly those students identified, through a traffic light system (RAG), as being at academic risk. After talking to staff, the team concludes that the RAG system worked well. The team also looked at the College's analyses of the National Student Surveys for 2016 and 2017 which showed that students felt well supported generally by their tutors and lecturers.

2.17 Based on evaluation of the documentation, the electronic resources and meetings with the staff and students, the review team concludes that the Expectation B3 is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.18 A strategic aim of the College's Sustainability and Transformation Framework (Strategic Plan) is to generate a cohesive, empowering and inclusive learning community where all staff, students and clients can enrich their professionalism, wellbeing, leadership capacity and insights into early years' provision. The Student Charter sets out the responsibilities of the College and its students with regards to developing students and promoting their professional achievement. Student academic development is built into the degree course provision while professional development is built into the Norland Diploma, which students study alongside the degree. The diploma is designed to equip them with essential practical skills and placement experiences to prepare them for employment.

2.19 The College provides a range of student support and advisory services, at recruitment, during study, following graduation and then throughout their careers. Pastoral and academic support includes a Personal Academic tutor, College Counsellor, Student Support Officer and an outsourced company which supports students in receipt of Disabled Student Allowance. The College has a personal academic tutoring system which is set out in the Personal and Academic Tutoring Policy, and an Improving Progress Policy which sets out the processes for the identification and support of students at risk.

2.20 Students are allocated a named Personal Academic Tutor who will usually remain with them throughout their studies and who meets with students on a minimum of four occasions during the academic year; this may be one-to-one or in small groups. The Personal Academic Tutor system is evaluated through student feedback and student representation at course committees. Students are also supported by a Student Support Officer who is expected to plan and deliver support sessions on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. The Student Support Officer has a role in the monitoring of the effectiveness of the support services set out in the previous paragraph. Student support is also a standing item on the agenda for weekly lecturer meetings.

2.21 The Improving Progress Policy is designed to identify students at academic risk through a traffic light system. Each semester, Programme Leaders, Lecturers, Placement Officers and the Student Support Officer meet to discuss each student individually. The Student Support Officer will then meet with the student and agree an action plan with them. Any student who fails to address their actions may be subject to the Student Disciplinary Policy or Fitness to Practise Policy or other appropriate framework. Students may also be discussed at the weekly lecturer meetings, and the College asks students to comment on their support through the module feedback surveys.

2.22 Student development is defined in the course team members' and Student Support Officer's job descriptions. Staff confirmed that the College provides staff development opportunities in this area. The role of students in their development and achievement is explained at induction, in the Student Charter and included in course activities. Furthermore, the student and placement handbooks set out expectations when on placement.

2.23 Employability is developed within the diploma, which runs alongside the degree. Following degree graduation, graduates undertake a one-year paid placement as a Newly Qualified Nanny (NQN). In preparation for this, a specialist team works with students to develop their employability skills throughout their three years of study with the College; this

support continues during their NQN year. Thereafter, the College continues to support the employability of alumni throughout their careers through its own employment agency. A programme of CPD activities must be undertaken to maintain status as 'a Norland Nanny'. The review team formed the opinion that the highly effective preparation of students for employment in the early years' sector is **good practice**.

2.24 These arrangements to develop students academically, personally and professionally allow the Expectation to be met.

2.25 The review team looked at the various policies and job descriptions and talked to staff engaged with student development and the students themselves.

2.26 Students confirmed that the College's move of its academic services to new premises in July 2017 has significantly improved their learning resources. Previously, the students reported issues including cramped teaching spaces, restricted library access and having to share facilities with external parties, for example cooking. This feedback was reflected in the lower scores within the College's NSS 2016 results relating to learning resources. Space for teaching has increased and special facilities now exist for the practical elements of the course such as cooking. The library has more reference books, is more accessible during teaching hours, and has extended opening hours and now benefits from the appointment of a library assistant. Students also confirmed they are involved with decisions to improve resources relating to student development; an example cited was the College's IT review following student feedback. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to improve learning resources.

2.27 The review team noted the work done to connect the degree and diploma following student and employer feedback and how the level 6 work-based learning module provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their employability within the degree programme.

2.28 Students explained the Change Agents programme, whereby students can request financial or practical support to start a new initiative. Recent examples include the 'Here to Hear' scheme whereby second and third year students mentor those in their first year.

2.29 There is a comprehensive range of mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of student support arrangements. The activity for identifying students at risk and then monitoring them is effective. The personal tutor meets with any student allocated a red or amber rating, to identify any issues and agree an action plan. These arrangements provide a timely mechanism for directing students to the Student Support Officer. A recently implemented student record system provides accurate student data and maintains a record of all meetings with students.

2.30 The integration of the Student Support Officer with the academic team to provide support throughout the student journey is a positive measure and students confirmed the support given by the Student Support Officer was effective and that they felt supported throughout their learning journey. The effective integration of academic and personal support which enables students to successfully complete their studies is **good practice**.

2.31 The College has an effective system for supporting and developing students into, through and beyond their higher education experience. It ensures students have access to the academic and pastoral support they need to help them achieve their potential. There is a strong focus on employability, both in preparing students for employment and thereafter during their career. The review team concludes that the College meets Expectation B4 and that the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.32 The College sets out how it will engage with students at both programme level and as a collective higher education student body in its Student Engagement Policy and outlines a key commitment within its Quality Enhancement Strategy to making students the heart of the College. At programme level, it is a requirement for the programme to elect two Student Engagement Representatives and a Head and Deputy Student Engagement Representative for each year who attend both programme Student-Staff Liaison Committees, and Programme Committees. In addition to programme-level student representatives, the Head and Deputy Head Student Engagement Representative positions exist to facilitate communication with the College senior leadership team and for the post-holders to attend Academic Board and for the Head Student Engagement Representative to attend the Board of Directors. Internal surveys, the results of the National Student Survey, module evaluation forms, and a suggestion box are also used as methods of collecting student opinions. The College has established policies and procedures that enable the Expectation to be met.

2.33 The review team analysed the operation and effectiveness of student engagement by examining the involvement of student representatives in College committee and programme structures, and the impact of the student voice and the feedback provided by the College in response to student comments. The review team examined documentation such as the Student Engagement Policy and Quality Enhancement Strategy, and the minutes and action plans from associated committees; explored the use of the VLE; and met students, student representatives and staff during the visit.

2.34 Student Engagement Representatives are elected by their peers at the start of the academic year and are well supported by a dedicated member of College staff - the Student Engagement Facilitator. Student Engagement Representatives receive training to support them in their role. A key method by which student representatives feed back to College is through its Student-Staff Liaison Committees, which are attended by the Student Engagement Facilitator to ensure College-level oversight. Student Engagement Representatives are positive about the effectiveness of the Student Engagement Representation system and their attendance at programme-level committees. They provided several examples of matters which had been raised at programme-level committee meetings and consequently responded to by the College through the 'You Said, We Did' updates. These updates are dynamic 'live' documents which are regularly and routinely updated on the College VLE. In addition, the College has recently introduced a system that allows anonymous feedback to be responded to immediately and in real time during meetings, and offers students the opportunity to respond to the College's initial response instantly.

2.35 The Head and Deputy Student Engagement Representative roles ensure that there is student representation at the highest level within the College and ensures there is a clear link between the student body and the senior leadership team. The Head and Deputy Student Engagement Representatives have regular scheduled opportunities to meet senior staff in addition to the formal representation on committee meetings, further demonstrating the College's commitment to listening and responding to the student voice.

2.36 Student feedback is considered as part of the annual report to the degree-awarding body, and students participated in the programme approval and programme periodic review processes. As a result of student and employer feedback, a major modification was made to

the delivery and content of the BA and Diploma programmes to ensure greater integration. Staff and students who met the review team confirmed that this change had been made. The resultant action demonstrates that students' views on teaching and learning are taken seriously by the College.

2.37 The College supports an effective Students as Change Agents initiative, and the review team heard and saw evidence of several initiatives that had been introduced as a result of the scheme, including the introduction of the 'Here to Hear' mentoring initiative for new students.

2.38 The wide range of opportunities for students to engage effectively as partners and academic citizens in quality assurance and enhancement processes is **good practice**. These opportunities also contribute to the commendation of Enhancement (see paragraph 4.7).

2.39 The review team concludes that the College takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met, and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.40 The College has an Assessment and Feedback Policy which sets out: the purposes of assessment and feedback; the principles of assessment design and maintenance of standards; and the procedures for developing and marking of assessments. An Assessment Scrutiny Panel (ASP) plans the assessment process. Assessment is overseen by the University's link tutor and the external examiner. Examination boards are held at the College but chaired by University staff. The University's Recognition of Prior Learning policy and procedures apply to the College.

2.41 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.42 The review team tested how the arrangements work in practice by reviewing relevant academic regulations, policies and procedures, programme and module specifications and handbooks, terms of reference and minutes of the ASP and examination boards, external examiner reports; and by meeting staff and students.

2.43 The ASP reviews assessment briefs to ensure that the assessment conforms to approved programme and module specifications. Its membership includes both the teaching team and the Student Support Officer and a member of the Learning Resource Centre staff thus ensuring that assessments are equitable, reasonable adjustments anticipated and learning resource requirements can be met. The review team concludes that the role and inclusive composition of the Assessment Scrutiny Panel in guaranteeing that assessment is equitable, valid and reliable is **good practice**.

2.44 Assessment tasks, assessment criteria and marking rubrics are clearly set out in module handbooks. The programme teams have developed a wider variety of assessment methods in response to the recommendations of the Periodic Review and Revalidation Panel; examples include multiple choice assessments, presentations and vlogs. The module leader is responsible for explaining the assessment task and criteria to students in the first week and at regular intervals thereafter. Students are encouraged to develop their assessment literacy by working through exemplars of previous students' work; the development of academic skills resources; referencing clinics and students taking responsibility in one module for developing their own assessment criteria.

2.45 Marking rubrics are published for the main assessment types and assignments are marked individually against the rubric enabling students to see how grades have been achieved. The College has recently introduced a colour coding feedback system enabling students to easily identify areas for improvement; for example, the depth of analysis, referencing, and grammar. The College practises anonymity in assessment where practicable. Assessments are submitted through plagiarism-detection software and feedback is electronic. There is a 20-day turnaround target for feedback. Students agree that the feedback they receive is timely and helpful. Students who achieve a grading of less than 40 per cent are offered a one-to-one with their personal tutor. All students can request a tutorial on how they could improve their grades.

2.46 The College has an Internal Moderation Policy. Programme team discussions about assessment criteria and standardisation exercises ensure consistency of internal marking. A sample of work is internally moderated with comments recorded on a tracking sheet; further moderation is undertaken by the University link tutor whose comments are added to the sheet.

2.47 The external examiner receives module descriptors and assessment tasks and a sample of moderated assessments. The external examiner normally attends examination boards. The external examiner reports annually to the University. Comments and recommendations are considered at module and programme level through the annual monitoring process and actions included in programme action plans.

2.48 In 2015/16 the University informed the College that the University's student record system would no longer be available. The College has resourced and installed its own student record system to generate data for assessment boards and transcripts. The University operates a two-tier exam board structure; module results are confirmed at module boards and progression and awards determined at the Progression/Awards Board of Examiners. Both are held at the College but are chaired by senior staff from the University.

2.49 Programme leaders have recently undertaken external staff development on assessment which has been cascaded to the programme team. A tangible outcome has been an increased focus on embedding formative assessment in the curriculum.

2.50 The College is subject to the University's policies for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). These are referred to in the Admissions Policy which is available on the website, but the policy is not located on the Admission page see also paragraph 3.5. To date no students have sought RPL.

2.51 The review team concludes that the College operates effective and robust processes for the assessment of students; the ASP is an example of good practice. Students are supported to develop their assessment literacy and staff enabled to develop their assessment practices through external and internal staff development. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.52 The appointment, induction, role and overall responsibility of the external examiner sits with the College's Awarding Body. This is set out in the College's and University of Gloucestershire's collaborative partnership agreement. The external examiner checks the standards of the degree through the verification of assessments and student awards, and through the annual monitoring and periodic review processes.

2.53 The College uses existing networks, including the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network and the Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees in Early years to identify potential external examiners. It has recently subscribed to the JISC external examiners' email list. The College's Academic Board is responsible for approving the nomination, based on the University's criteria. The nomination is then forwarded to the University for approval.

2.54 The external examiner's duties include activities at programme level and at module level. They are consulted at periodic programme review and when changes are proposed to the programme. Their annual report is completed using the University's template and this is considered by both the University and the College. The College now responds to the external examiner's report (programme action plan) although this used to be completed by the University. Action plans from the report are monitored at the programme committees and Academic Board. The external examiner is a member of the College's Awards/Progression Board of Examiners. External examiner duties include checking Module Handbooks, the setting of assessments and sampling students' work. The external examiner's reports are published on the College's intranet and students are signposted to them in the Programme Handbook. The approach to external examining as described above allows the Expectation to be met.

2.55 The review team read external examiner reports (2016 and 2017), action plans, Academic Board minutes when discussing appointments, terms of reference and minutes for the Award Boards, communications between the College and the external examiner, and checked the Collaborative Partnership Agreement. The team also questioned senior management and students on various aspects of the external examiner process.

2.56 While students generally could not confirm their awareness of the external examiners' reports, they did know that external examiners existed and are sent a proportion of assessments to check if they have been graded fairly. The Academic Board student representative confirmed that the external examiner's report was discussed at meetings.

2.57 The review team was satisfied that the process for identifying, nominating and approving external examiner appointments was effective, ensured independence and mitigated against conflict of interest.

2.58 The team found evidence of the external examiner being fully engaged with the external examining process and their duties. This included the current external examiner contributing to the periodic review and subsequent major programme change in 2016. Minutes from the Award/Progression Board of Examiners meetings confirmed appropriate external examiner engagement when awarding credit, progression and qualifications to students. External examiner annual reports and their corresponding action plans were comprehensive and were considered by the appropriate personnel and committees. They also contribute to the annual monitoring process.

2.59 Scrutiny of the external examiner reports from 2016 and 2017 confirmed dutiful consideration and responses by the external examiner. She was able to confirm that the standards set were appropriate to the level of the award and the levels achieved by students. However, the 2016 report highlighted repeated feedback from the previous year on issues regarding referencing and plagiarism with a suggestion that not all feedback had been taken on board. The 2017 external examiner report expressed the same concern. While the College followed process by discussing the report at the Academic Board meeting in October 2017, the minutes noted that the issue of plagiarism was ongoing, needed to be tackled more specifically and specified that it should be discussed at the Standardisation meeting. However, minutes of that meeting indicated that this issue had not been discussed. Taking into consideration the repeated concern raised by the external examiner, without a satisfactory conclusion, the review team **recommends** that the College strengthen the processes for full and serious consideration of the external examiner's report and ensure that agreed actions have been completed (see also paragraph 1.46).

2.60 The review team concludes that the College meets Expectation B7 but in the light of the recommendation rates the associated risk as moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.61 The University has overall responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the degree programme. The College's Academic Board has responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. It exercises oversight of annual monitoring processes by receiving and approving annual monitoring reports, including the annual report to the University. The College has developed its own Programme Monitoring Policy which sets out the general principles, systems and governance arrangements for annual monitoring of its programmes and the key inputs to the process. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.62 The review team examined how the arrangements work in practice by considering relevant policies and procedures, annual monitoring and periodic review reports, minutes of programme committees and academic board; and by meeting staff, students, employers and recent graduates.

2.63 The College aims to inculcate a culture in which quality assurance is a professional issue and not a management function. Staff are encouraged to engage in continuous reflection and self-assessment. Teaching staff meet weekly to consider quality matters, student progress and support. Module review forms are completed for each module and considered at Programme Committees. The BA Programme Leader prepares the annual programme report drawing on module reviews, the external examiner's report, NSS outcomes, student surveys and other feedback from students. The annual report is considered by the Programme Committee and approved by Academic Board. The Quality and Enhancement Manager prepares the University's Course Evaluation Form and Annual Partnership Review, which is also approved by Academic Board.

2.64 The College has strengthened its internal processes for annual monitoring by requiring written (rather than oral) presentation of module reviews, and the introduction of annual monitoring reports for quality and enhancement, student engagement, admissions, the library and student support. All annual monitoring reports result in detailed departmental enhancement plans, which are monitored by the committee system. These plans contribute to the College Enhancement Plan which sets out how the College intends to meet its strategic planning objectives. The review team concludes that the College-wide meticulous approach to annual monitoring that leads to comprehensive enhancement plans is **good practice**. The College has recently established a Learning and Teaching Committee which will strengthen further its capacity to monitor and review the student learning experience.

2.65 The BA programme was reviewed in accordance with the University's procedures in 2016 and revalidated for a further five years. Recommendations by the Periodic Review and Revalidation Panel concerning the location of research methods within the curriculum and the better integration of theory and practice combined with feedback from employers and students led the programme team to make a major modification to the content and delivery of both the BA and Diploma programmes in 2016-17. Staff and first-year students who met the review team indicated that the two programmes are now more closely aligned with theory lectures being followed by practical sessions.

2.66 The College has one previous experience of closing a programme. Although the College did not have a formal course closure policy at the time, all the students were supported to complete their studies. A formal policy is now in place.

2.67 The review team concludes that the College operates systematic and effective systems for programme monitoring; its meticulous approach to annual monitoring and action planning at all levels is **good practice**. The periodic review process prompted a re-examination of the relationship between the Diploma and degree programmes; early indications are that the major modification has enhanced the students' learning experience. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.68 The College's process for handling complaints is set out in the Students Complaints Procedure, the Formal Complaints Procedure (intended for clients and stakeholders), and the Application Appeals and Complaints Procedure. The Students Complaints Procedure clarifies that academic appeals are not considered under this procedure and redirects students to the University's Academic Regulations for Taught Provision. The College's complaints policies are made available on the College website and through the College's VLE. Students are informed of the policies and procedures in the Programme Handbook and at induction. The procedures include the grounds for making a complaint or an appeal, the timescales for handling complaints and appeals, and details which staff are to be involved at the respective stages. The College encourages informal discussion of complaints to seek early resolution. The policies and procedures therefore allow the Expectation to be met.

2.69 The review team tested the College's approach to student appeals and complaints through meetings with students, professional support staff, senior staff, and teaching staff. The team also consulted documentation, including the associated policies for complaints, student Programme Handbook, and the collaborative agreement with the University.

2.70 During the visit, the review team discussed with both staff and students the associated policies and procedures for student and applicant appeals and complaints. It became clear to the review team that the College's Students Complaints Procedure and the Application Appeals and Complaints Procedure do not comply fully with the collaborative agreement with the degree-awarding body. There is an absence of information in the College's processes on the role of the degree-awarding body in considering formal complaints and of the distinction between academic and non-academic complaints. Students felt that they could rely on College staff to provide information on the process for complaints. However, the review team found that there is some confusion among College staff about whether students did in fact have recourse to the degree-awarding body following the completion of the College's internal procedures for student and applicant complaints, so compounding the situation further. The review team therefore **recommends** the College revise the policies and procedures for applicant and student complaints to ensure the requirements of the collaborative agreement are met.

2.71 Overall, while there is an absence of clear information detailing the role of the awarding body in the consideration of complaints, the College has appropriate procedures for handling complaints. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.72 Work placements are an integral part of the learning experience with students spending approximately 16 weeks in placement each year. These placements feed into the College's Diploma, which students study alongside the degree, and are designed to prepare students for employment. Placement Officers monitor the provision of placements. As with the BA, there is a Programme Leader for the Diploma and a specification that sets out the intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment strategies. Mechanisms for assuring the quality of the Diploma's provision, and thus work placements, align to those for higher education with programme handbooks, annual monitoring, periodic review and governance oversight in addition to the programme specification. There is also a student, placement and college partner agreement. The work-based learning module at level 6 of the degree provides a conduit for students between the two programmes, with the College maintaining that it is careful not to assess the same work twice.

2.73 These arrangements for both work placements within the diploma and work-based learning within the degree would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.74 The review team saw evidence of the handbooks, placement induction checklist, and the student, placement and college partner agreement. They talked to students, staff and employers, and viewed policies which support the placements. These included the Fitness to Practise Policy, Code of Professional Responsibilities and Safer Recruitment Declaration. Evidence of the external examiner's consideration of placements was also noted in their annual report.

2.75 The review team was satisfied that the College's approach to managing placements and work-based learning is effective. Placement partners are visited prior to students commencing their placements, with checks for health and safety being undertaken. All students are required to complete an induction checklist during their first week; this includes the identification of risks, health and safety and what to do if concerns are raised regarding the safety of children. All students are visited at least once during the placement and placement officers observe them in practice as part of the Norland Diploma. Students remain under supervision always when working on placements. The College' NQN Team conducts appraisals with their students at least three times a year. On successful completion of the NQN year, the graduate is awarded the Norland Diploma. The College takes safeguarding seriously and requires all applicants (and then all students on an annual basis) to complete a declaration to inform the College of any potential safeguarding issues which may prevent the applicant or student from working with children.

2.76 Student performance on work placements is assessed as part of the College's Diploma, with assessments graded by the College's Placement Officer rather than placement personnel. Placement Officers also have a role under the Improving Process Policy to consider each student against the RAG rating system. Work-related products that students produce on placement are also used in the assessment of the degree and often require students to have carried out activities within the placement, such as observations of children or planning, implementing and evaluating activities. Students confirmed this worked

and provided better connectivity between the degree and diploma; which was something they had raised previously in their feedback.

2.77 As well as the feedback provided by students at the time of the review, the team also noted the exemplary scores in the College's NSS 2016 results with overall satisfaction scores of 94 per cent for careers and 99 per cent for work placements.

2.78 There is an effective framework in place for the management of work placements, which clearly sets out the responsibilities of each partner within the work placement arrangement. This provides a robust mechanism for managing the relationship between the College, the employer and the student. Students are provided with appropriate information and guidance to support them before and during their work placements. Moreover, the work placements within the Diploma provide good preparation for future employment.

2.79 The review team concludes that the College meets Expectation B10 and that the level of risk is low.

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

2.80 The College does not deliver research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.82 Of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area all have been met, with a judgement of low risk being reached in eight. The remaining two were assessed as having moderate risk based on the recommendations made.

2.83 Six instances of good practice are identified in five separate Expectations indicating the breadth of good practice in managing the quality of learning opportunities. For Expectation B3, the comprehensive range of staff development opportunities is noted. In Expectation B4 the integration of academic and personal support enables students to successfully complete their studies. There is also highly effective preparation of students for employment. In Expectation B5 the review team noted the wide range of opportunities for students to engage as partners and academic citizens. The work of the Assessment Scrutiny Panel is noted as guaranteeing the equitability, validity and reliability of assessment. Lastly, the College's meticulous approach to annual monitoring and its link to enhancement is highlighted under Expectation B8.

2.84 Three recommendations are made. Firstly, regarding Expectation B1 the College is recommended to formalise the internal procedures for approval and reapproval of programmes and to include independent external expertise in the process. Expectation B7 notes the recommendation to strengthen the processes for consideration of external examiner reports and to ensure actions have been completed. Finally, under Expectation B9 there is a recommendation to revise policies and procedures for applicant and student complaints to ensure these align with the requirements of the awarding body.

2.85 One affirmation of actions already being taken relates to Expectation B4 where the College has taken steps to improve learning resources.

2.86 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 An Information Delegation Protocol explicitly outlines the approval process for all external communications including marketing materials, both printed and online. The accuracy of programme information at the College-level, including the definitive course documentation, is the responsibility of the Vice-principal, and is in line with the Course Definitive Documents Policy and Student Retention Policy. The College's Student Charter sets out the mutual expectations and obligations between Norland and its students. The website includes information on the College's mission and values. The policies and processes in place allow the Expectation to be met.

3.2 The review team tested the Expectation by reading a wide range of documentation including the College prospectus, Programme Handbook, and policies and procedures. The team also viewed the College website and VLE and met with students, staff, alumni and placement providers.

3.3 The team found that students were satisfied with the information they receive. This includes pre-arrival information, which they feel is comprehensive, particularly in relation to student fees and other costs associated with studying at the College. The College maintains a printed prospectus and hosts Open Days as part of recruitment activity. Social media is a further key tool for the College and it has an Acceptable Use of IT and Social Media Policy to ensure the appropriate use of social media platforms; a similar policy is in place for students. Pre-enrolment information is shared with students by email and once on the programme students confirmed that course documentation, including the Programme Handbook, Student Placement Handbook and the Code Professional Responsibilities, and key policies and processes were made available to them during induction and are accessible on the College's VLE. Staff are provided with key policies and processes through a Document Hub, available on the College's VLE. Staff met by the review team confirmed that this was accessible, and that some information populated on the Document Hub is limited by role and only accessible to those to whom it was relevant.

3.4 The College makes use of a management information system for its management needs and contains information on assessment outcomes, retention, progression and achievement data and details of Personal Academic Tutor meetings.

3.5 The website is a key method for communicating information to stakeholders and prospective students. The team explored the accessibility of information on the website for prospective students. Market analysis undertaken by the College found that the website was helpful and informative pre-application; however, discussions with students and staff at the College revealed that both students and staff were unclear where key policies such as the Admissions Policy and Application Appeals and Complaints Procedure were published on the College website, directing the team to the incorrect section of the website. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure that all policies relevant to prospective students are easily accessible on the College website.

3.6 As discussed in Expectation B9, the review team found instances where the College's complaints processes were not fully in line with the collaborative agreement with the University of Gloucestershire.

3.7 The review team met a small sample of placement providers with different relationships with the College. The placement providers met by the team felt that the information provided to them was good and that they were routinely provided with the Placement Handbook and in some instances, the Programme Handbook.

3.8 External examiner reports are published on the College VLE and the name of the external examiner is published in the Programme Handbook.

3.9 The review team concludes that information about learning opportunities at the College is generally comprehensive and well received by stakeholders. The College's processes for ensuring the accuracy and consistency of information are developed and well-articulated; albeit with some issues to be addressed with respect to clarifying the role of the degree-awarding body in complaints processes as outlined in Expectation B9. While the review team notes the recommendation on making all policies relevant to prospective students more easily accessible on the College website, the team concludes that the College generally produces information for its intended audiences about higher education that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.11 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There is one recommendation that all policies relevant to prospective students are easily accessible on the College website.

3.12 No affirmations were made, and no specific instances of good practice identified under this Expectation.

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

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 the enhancement of student learning opportunities is contained in its Quality Enhancement Strategy. The Strategy sets out the guiding principles, mechanisms and responsibilities for quality enhancement. These principles include the premise that enhancement should: be aligned with the College's mission, strategies and values; be informed by data, critical reflection and a wide range of qualitative and quantitative evidence; include engagement of internal and external stakeholders; be embedded in routine quality review and assurance activities; include collegiality and the sharing of good practice. All departments, academic and professional support, engage in annual monitoring and develop enhancement plans, which are monitored through the committee system. There is an annual Principal's Office Enhancement Plan that sets out key performance indicators for achievement of the new Sustainability and Transformation Plan 2017-22. The College's strategic approach to enhancement allows the Expectation to be met.

4.2 The review team tested how the College operationalises its approach to enhancement by examining its strategies, policies and procedures, departmental monitoring reports and action plans, minutes of committees and other meetings, internal and external review reports, student surveys and other data. The team also met staff, students, employers and alumni.

4.3 Opportunities for enhancement arise from several sources and include: analysis of data; feedback from students, alumni and employers; external examiner reports: external reviews; monitoring and review of modules and programmes; and discussions at Academic Board, programme committees, monthly staff meetings and weekly lecturer meetings. The review team judges the recently strengthened annual monitoring processes undertaken across all departments to be systematic, thorough and effective in meticulously identifying actions for enhancement (see also paragraph 2.38)

4.4 The College values innovation and creativity. Good practice is identified through peer observation of teaching, student feedback, external reports and through staff development; and disseminated at monthly staff meetings and with effect from 2017/18 academic year at conversation cafes. It is anticipated that the recently established Learning and Teaching Committee will play a key role in identifying and disseminating effective and innovative practice. All staff have access to a wide range of funded staff development opportunities identified primarily through the staff development review process. Opportunities include support for: the acquisition of higher level academic qualifications; applications for HEA fellowship; renewal of practice experience; attendance at conferences and external networking, CPD and other training events. The College holds an annual two-day internal conference providing an opportunity for staff to showcase their research and scholarly activity. The remit of the newly appointed Research Fellow is to support publication of staff and student research projects. Students who met the review team commented on the positive impact on their learning of academic and professional development undertaken by lecturing staff (see also paragraph 2.14).

4.5 One of the key principles of the Quality Enhancement Strategy is the inclusion of students both through their representation in the formal deliberative structures, for example

the Board of Directors, Academic Board and Programme Committees, and by being attentive to the voice of students. The student representative system works effectively to ensure that students' views are sought and listened to in respect of programme delivery, assessment, learning resources, placement opportunities and proposals for programme modifications. Student representatives have regular scheduled opportunities to meet senior staff and staff generally hold drop-in sessions or visit the student common room. Student representatives receive good support from the Student Engagement Facilitator. The College has participated in the NSS since 2016 and it has conducted similar surveys with first and second year students. Student forums are used to help staff interpret the outcomes. The College supports the Students as Change Agents initiative; one outcome is the introduction of a Here to Hear mentoring initiative for new students. The review team notes the good practice evident in the wide range of opportunities for students to engage effectively as partner and academic citizens in quality assurance and enhancement processes (see also paragraph 2.38).

4.6 Students' learning opportunities are enhanced significantly by the delivery of the Norland Diploma alongside the degree programme. The Diploma programme provides practical training, placement learning in a variety of early years' settings and a post-graduation Newly Qualified Nanny (NQN) year. The College has taken several steps to improve the coherence of the two programmes and ensure better integration of theory and practice including; careful planning of delivery at weekly lecturer meetings; cross teaching and peer observation across programmes; consecutive timetabling of theory and practice sessions; and coordination of assessment deadlines. Student employability is enhanced further through the Norland Agency which organises placements for the NQN year and assists graduates in securing permanent positions. Students who complete the degree and diploma, including the NQN year, become Norlanders. The College offers a CPD programme for Norlanders to enable them to keep up to date. Continuous feedback from alumni and employers is used to ensure the programmes are up to date and relevant to modern families.

4.7 The review team concludes that the College's Quality Enhancement Strategy meets its guiding principles of being holistic, inclusive, embedded within routine quality review and assurance activities, creating an ethos of reflection and self-criticality aimed at continuous improvement of the learning experience. The review team concludes that the strategic and systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities resulting in a highly effective learning environment is **good practice**.

4.8 The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.10 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.11 The College has a strategic approach to enhancing learning opportunities and a range of deliberate steps are in place at institutional level. The strategy is holistic, embedded within routine quality review and assurance, and creates an ethos of reflection and self-criticality. The review team identified the systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities which results in a highly effective learning environment as good practice. The widespread influence of the strategy is evident in the good practice examples identified in the Expectations of Part B of the Quality Code and leads the team to its commended judgement below.

4.12 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

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 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

QAA2056 - R9743 - Feb 18

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