



Higher Education Review of North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

February 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at North Warwickshire and Hinckley College. The review took place from 9 to 11 February 2016 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Philip Davies
- Dr Nicola Jackson
- Mrs Sala Khulumula (student reviewer)
- Dr Mark Lyne.

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

In reviewing North Warwickshire and Hinckley College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.³ A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)⁴ and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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

² Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

⁴ Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at North Warwickshire and Hinckley College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at North Warwickshire and Hinckley College.

- The high level of support provided by academic staff for students' academic, personal and professional development (Expectation B4).
- The exceptional entrepreneurial experience provided by the College through partnerships with employers in the creative industries (Expectation B10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to North Warwickshire and Hinckley College.

By September 2016:

- review and formalise the process for the modification and recording of definitive documents for Pearson programmes (Expectation A2.2)
- strengthen and formalise the processes for the academic approval of Pearson programmes (Expectations B1 and A2.1)
- ensure the clarity and consistency of information and guidance provided to students on recruitment, selection and admission (Expectation B2)
- provide training and support for all student representatives to enable them to engage fully in quality assurance and enhancement processes (Expectation B5)
- ensure students are aware of and guided to external examiners' reports (Expectation B7)
- ensure the standardisation of information provided in all programme handbooks (Expectations C and A2.2).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The alignment of the Higher Education Staff Handbook to the Quality Code and the steps being taken to promote it to staff (Expectation C).

Theme: Student Employability

The College has developed its curriculum to take account of the importance of preparation for employment and provide related student experiences. It recognises, through its employability strategy, that employers are changing their approach to selecting employees. The strategy describes the aims, objectives and measures by which the College will embed employability skills into programmes and develop strategic partnerships with employers.

Employers are engaged in the design and modification of the curriculum as a matter of priority. There are also strong links between academic staff and employers. The College has an expectation that all students have some work experience as part of their programme and those who do not have direct access are provided with a simulated experience.

Employability related initiatives include the creation of the post of quality administrator with responsibility for the coordination of work experience and project-based learning, research into the effects of employer-led delivery, employer-led master classes and engagement with the College's Quality Team.

Students confirmed that employability is embedded in the curriculum and that work placements and experience are at the core of their programmes. They consider that the College is very committed to ensuring they are given the skills and experience to enhance their employability.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review](#).

About North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College (the College) is within the three boroughs of Nuneaton and Bedworth, North Warwickshire and Hinckley, and Bosworth that have a total population of approximately 300,000 people. The College recruits students from the Warwickshire/ Leicestershire and East Midlands/West Midlands boundaries. Its partnership arrangements with higher education providers reflect the local and regional priorities. The College's mission is 'To achieve success through learning'.

The College provides programmes in partnership with the University of Warwick, De Montfort University, Coventry University and the University of West London. It also provides programmes with Pearson as the awarding organisation.

In February 2013, the College entered a Federation arrangement with South Leicestershire College with a joint Principal and Chief Executive. This followed an 18-month process during which both college corporations undertook a strategic options review. The two colleges, with the Midland Academies Trust, form the 'Learning Group'.

The College considers that it has a range of current key challenges, including:

- financial sustainability
- fluctuating recruitment, which is declining, following changes in student number and fee regulations in 2012
- Student Number Control limitations have meant that some development opportunities have been missed in the past. A key challenge has been maximisation of recruitment opportunity and curriculum development within the variance applied
- a reduction in the allocation of franchised student numbers from some partner universities
- a competitive higher education hinterland

- the low level of aspiration and awareness of higher education in the local community
- the current economic climate, which has significantly reduced the level of employer investment in staff development and skills improvement and a steady decline in employer-funded students applying for higher education programmes, for example engineering
- the debt aversion of potential students.

An Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) was conducted by QAA in June 2011. There were successful outcomes in the three key judgements and the review team identified good practice in the 'management of its responsibilities for academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities and public information about the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding bodies'. Following the IQER the College worked with QAA to develop an action plan to ensure all key areas for development were addressed in a timely manner. It has responded to both internal change and legislation with higher education as an integral part of the strategic development.

In the 2011 IQER, a number of recommendations were identified for the College's enhancement of the higher education provision.

The review team considered that it would be advisable for the College to:

- consolidate the operation of the present quality assurance procedures and supplement them with additional elements specific to higher education, to improve the oversight of the provision
- ensure action plans are implemented allowing students to obtain the full benefits of the agreed outcomes of QAA reviews, for example concerning the content of course handbooks
- ensure that admissions procedures provide sufficient guidance and support for students to allow them to achieve the awards for which they were accepted in the expected timescale and advise them in a timely manner if changes to their programme are proposed
- contextualise Edexcel programme specifications using QAA guidelines to provide an oversight of each course that more fully reflects the opportunities available to students, for example on module choice.

In addition, the review team considered that it would be desirable for the College to:

- ensure that the material on the College's virtual learning environment is well organised to improve students' access to information.

The College's IQER summative action plan records that responses to all recommendations were completed by July 2012 with a number requiring ongoing development in subsequent years.

With regard to the first advisable recommendation, the review team found that the quality assurance procedures of the College continue to need more development to ensure they are higher education specific. Likewise, the College has yet to fully respond to the second advisable recommendation and the review team has made a recommendation in Section C of this report concerning student handbooks.

The review team found that the third advisable recommendation has been addressed but other issues in this area were identified which has resulted in a recommendation in this report.

The final advisable recommendation has not been addressed to the satisfaction of the review team and further related recommendations are made in sections 1 and 2 of this report regarding Pearson provision.

The one desirable recommendation has been addressed. However, the review team has identified related aspects that the College should develop.

Overall, the review team found that while action has been taken by the College in response to the recommendations in the IQER report, further work is required and this is reflected in the recommendations arising from this report. The good practice identified in the previous report has been successfully built on with, for example, the establishment of a College support business - Spin-top Media.

Explanation of the findings about North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (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 agreements to provide higher education programmes with four universities and one awarding organisation - The University of West London, The University of Warwick, Coventry University, De Montfort University and Pearson Education. The awarding partners are responsible for positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications and for ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with qualification descriptors, while the College has responsibility for maintaining them.

1.2 In order to maintain threshold academic standards the College's internal and external quality assurance processes are overseen by the awarding partners. The College asserts that during validation and revalidation it checks all qualifications against the appropriate level in the FHEQ as part of the validation process, though this is ultimately the responsibility of the awarding partners. The College also ensures that due weight is given to external reference points during the initial approval and periodic review process. The College makes use of Subject Benchmark Statements, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) and Sector Skills Council frameworks and competency requirements, where relevant, to inform curriculum design. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is used when aligning programmes and ensuring entry requirements

are appropriate. The College also provides a Higher Education Staff Handbook to assist staff in this process which is structured on the Quality Code.

1.3 The team tested the maintenance of academic standards by examining documentation, including partnership agreements and responsibility documents, programme specifications, and other documentation. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and senior staff, including representatives from the awarding bodies.

1.4 The team found that the College ensures that academic levels within programme specifications align with the FHEQ and that subject and qualification benchmarks are effectively taken into account in the development and maintenance of qualifications. Programme specifications with university partners are comprehensive and demonstrates compliance with the FHEQ and QCF. All programmes adopt the programme titles allocated by the awarding body and are consistent with titling conventions. The teaching teams write and update their own units and devise their own learning outcomes overseen by the awarding bodies. Some programmes are directly mapped to the Quality Code while, in addition, some programmes are additionally aligned with PSRB requirements. For instance, the FdA Healthcare Play Specialism has Healthcare Play Specialist Education Trust (HPSET) accredited assignments.

1.5 The team also found that programmes have clearly defined programme learning outcomes and that these align with the relevant qualification descriptors. Senior staff did not demonstrate full awareness of the Quality Code and the FHEQ though teaching staff were more familiar with the standards and their implications for maintaining standards. The College has written guidance for staff in the form of a dedicated Higher Education Staff Handbook with sections aligned to the Quality Code and its application to programme delivery but the team found that not all staff were aware of the Handbook. This is further described in Part C where the team makes an affirmation.

1.6 Overall, the review team found that the process of establishing and maintaining standards is effective and that the oversight of the university partners and Pearson are sufficient to ensure alignment of programmes with the FHEQ, qualification characteristics, the relevant credit frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.7 The team concludes that this Expectation is met and the risk in this area 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

1.8 All higher education programmes at the College are subject to the overall academic governance and regulations of the awarding partners. The universities and Pearson Education are responsible for awarding credit according to their own academic frameworks and regulations. They do not delegate any authority for awarding credit to the College. The maintenance of academic standards and quality assurance is the responsibility of both parties with the final authority resting with the awarding bodies and organisation.

1.9 The College seeks to ensure that all higher education programmes take account of relevant qualification characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements and that all programmes have published specifications which adhere to qualification benchmark statements and are subject to internal approval by allocated curriculum personnel and internal verification process. All programmes are subject to the academic framework and regulations of the degree-awarding partner. The generation of certificates and records of study is, in all cases, the responsibility of the relevant awarding partner, whether that be Pearson or a partner university.

1.10 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements for academic governance, academic frameworks and assessment regulations. The team examined relevant documentation, including partnership agreements, programme specifications and programme handbooks, assessment documentation and minutes of committee meetings. The team also held meetings with the Principal, senior and teaching staff, awarding body representatives, students, alumni and support staff.

1.11 In the case of Pearson awards, the College does not devise its own regulations but operates those centrally published by Pearson. The College produces contextualised assignments but there are no contextualised programme specifications and no contextualised programme-level learning outcomes.

1.12 The College has formal processes for the approval of programmes using a two-stage approval process. Proposals originate with programme teams and leaders and are then passed to curriculum directors and recorded in curriculum planning documents which are approved by the executive. Course development has a strong economic rationale but the discussion of academic issues is not always evident and there is no consistent reference to compliance with standards or adequacy of resources. The team found that there is no clear academic rationale for the mix of Pearson programmes, nor is there a proper formal sign-off for programmes and ongoing changes. The College approval process does not make reference to the need to produce a definitive document and have it signed off. The College needs to strengthen and formalise the processes for the academic approval of Pearson programmes. This is further described under Expectation B1 where the team makes a recommendation.

1.13 The College has developed new regulations and template agendas for the governance of Pearson examination boards. These are designed to ensure that the College takes ownership of the assessment process and brings consistency of approach. The team found that the Pearson examination board minutes are a very brief record of student

performance with no evidence of what most of the cohort did. Further, the team found that some examination boards were chaired by the programme leader and had no independent members, but this was addressed by recently introduced regulations.

1.14 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk in this area 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

1.15 The College has programme specifications for all its higher education programmes which are produced and ratified by the respective awarding partner. In the case of university provision, the College has a definitive record of each programme and qualification that is approved together with changes to it. In the case of Pearson provision, the College uses generic Pearson specifications.

1.16 All programmes are defined by a programme specification which has been validated by the awarding partner. These programme specifications are maintained by the programme teams which run them. Each programme has a designated programme leader, supported by a link tutor in the case of university programmes, and this role includes maintaining all documentation relating to the management, assessment and internal verification processes in response to awarding partner requirements.

1.17 The Directors of Learning and Skills hold responsibility for curriculum delivery and management of programmes and are also responsible for self-assessment and reporting of higher education programmes.

1.18 The review team examined the documentation associated with the validation and review of higher education programmes provided by the College. The team looked at programme specifications and related documents, including minutes of committee meetings. The team also held meetings with the Principal, senior and teaching staff, awarding body representatives, students, alumni, and support staff.

1.19 The team found that all College higher education programmes have published programme specifications which act as a definitive record of each programme and of subsequent changes to it, and the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme. Programme specification documentation is subject to internal approval while assessment processes are subject to internal and external verification.

1.20 Programme specifications inform programme handbooks which provide students with definitive student-oriented information. The team found that there is no single template for programme handbooks and consequently they are variable in consistency with some containing intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and credit rating while some do not. Information lacking in handbooks is found elsewhere; on virtual learning environments (VLEs) and module descriptors. The College needs to ensure the standardisation of information provided in all programme handbooks. This is further discussed in Section C where the team makes a recommendation.

1.21 The content of programmes is not decided by a formal process but by agreement between the Directors of Learning and Skills and the Head of Higher Education. Consequently, there is no central College process that oversees the modification of Pearson programmes. The College keeps distributed records of programmes and these are maintained by each of the Directors of Learning and Skills. However, current information about modified programmes is not held in a single location nor managed centrally by the

College. The team **recommends** that the College review and formalise the process for the modification and recording of definitive documents for Pearson programmes by September 2016.

1.22 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk 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 works with its awarding bodies and Pearson to maintain collaborative programmes. It makes provision with four awarding bodies to deliver higher education qualifications: the University of Warwick for validated and franchised provision; De Montfort University, Coventry University and the University of West London for validated programmes.

1.24 Programme design and approval for collaborative provision is subject to the relevant awarding body and organisation processes and these are followed by the College. Programme specifications are available from the awarding body or Pearson, providing definitive criteria relating to the FHEQ, learning outcomes, knowledge level and evidence requirements. The College selects relevant Pearson units to provide contextualised programmes within the specified combinations. The level of award for all programmes is determined by the relevant awarding body or organisation.

1.25 Following the College's formal curriculum planning process, programmes are approved by the College Executive and entered on the curriculum plan for the subsequent year.

1.26 These procedures would allow the Expectation to be met. The partner universities and Pearson ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations. The College's decision to approve delivery of programmes is considered and systematic.

1.27 The review team examined programme specifications and responsibilities grids for partner universities and Pearson. Examples of university approval processes for the delivery of programmes were considered, along with assignment briefs and documentation showing programme approval. Guidance documents for new programme approval were also considered by the review team. In meetings with staff and students the review team discussed their awareness of these processes.

1.28 Effective processes are in place to ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with academic frameworks and regulations. Programme design for collaborative provision is subject to the relevant university processes and it is evident that these are followed. The level of award for all programmes is determined by the relevant awarding body or organisation.

1.29 Programme specification documentation and assignment briefs are subject to internal approval by allocated curriculum personnel. All programmes are monitored and approved through the curriculum planning process undertaken annually by the Directors of Learning and Skills.

1.30 Programme documentation and assignment briefs for directly funded provision are subject to internal approval by allocated curriculum personnel through an internal verification process. Information about programmes is published to students through programme handbooks. However, definitive information for Pearson programmes is not contextualised, including the rationale for the combination of units selected, and the team considers this further under Expectation B1 with a recommendation.

1.31 All programmes are monitored and approved through the annual curriculum planning process. There are two stages for the approval of new programmes - approval in principle by the Director of Learning and Skills and the Director of Quality to ensure that the programme is financially viable and within the College strategy, and full academic approval by the Vice Principal (Curriculum and Planning) as part of the curriculum-planning process.

1.32 The team considers that the College ensures that academic standards are maintained to a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with its partners' academic frameworks and regulations. The Expectation is met with a low risk.

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

1.33 The universities partnering the College each have their own approval processes and regulations. These ensure that achievement of learning outcomes at module and programme level are clearly linked to the award of credit and that programme design enables their own and UK threshold academic standards to be met. For its Higher National awards, the College uses the programme specifications and module learning outcomes provided by Pearson which have been developed to ensure that the award of credit is linked to the achievement of defined learning outcomes and that threshold academic standards are met. The College operates prescribed procedures for the assessment of students and the internal and external verification of their achievement. The latter includes the use of external examiners to confirm that academic standards are appropriate and that students have satisfied the requirements of their award. Exam boards formally confirm the grades achieved, and credit and qualifications conferred.

1.34 The review team considers that the systems in place to award credit and qualifications, and confirm the achievement of learning outcomes would meet the Expectation.

1.35 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising evidence, including programme specifications, programme handbooks, module guides, assessment briefs, exam board minutes and external examiner reports.

1.36 For programmes developed in conjunction with its university partners, the College has in place programme specifications that clearly establish the requirements of awards in terms of their programme-level learning outcomes and modular requirements, credit ratings and learning outcomes. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that these are at a suitable level and meet threshold standards. In the case of Pearson awards, the College uses the programme specifications provided by the awarding organisation.

1.37 Programme handbooks and module guides are effective in providing information regarding assessment, although the former could benefit from more consistency in their content (see Expectation C). Procedures are in place to ensure that the design of individual assessments conforms to course requirements and allows module learning outcomes to be achieved at an appropriate level. Internal and external verification procedures are used effectively by the College to confirm the consistent grading of assessed work culminating in the oversight provided by external examiners.

1.38 The College does not contextualise the programme specifications for Higher National awards in the way that Pearson anticipates, and consequently the programme-level learning outcomes are not separately defined. However, the processes in place are robust in ensuring that all module learning outcomes are achieved and that the requirements of the

award have been met. This is in turn confirmed by the external examiner appointed by Pearson to sign off their awards.

1.39 In the case of awards of the university partners and Pearson, the review team saw evidence of the robust operation of examination boards and their important role in confirming the award of credit and qualifications in line with the approved requirements of each programme.

1.40 The team concludes that the College operates systems that ensure that assessment is effective in allowing learning outcomes to be achieved at an appropriate standard, and that credit and qualifications are awarded in accordance with the achievement of these learning outcomes. The team notes the absence of customised programme specifications in the case of Pearson awards. However, it still considers Expectation A3.2 to be met and to represent a low risk.

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

1.41 Monitoring and review of higher education programmes is conducted annually through College and awarding partner processes. The College conducts periodic review through the curriculum planning process and self-assessment is undertaken annually by the Directors of Learning and Skills. During this process all programmes are scrutinised, validated and re-approved for delivery if applicable.

1.42 The awarding bodies and Pearson have responsibility for ensuring that criteria are aligned to the correct academic level of the FHEQ regarding qualifications, learning outcomes, knowledge level and evidence requirements. The College has a course approval process for directly funded programmes which ensures that the correct combination and content of modules and units is delivered.

1.43 Assessment of learning outcomes is subject to internal verification processes and the procedures of the awarding bodies. Assignment briefs and marking criteria are written to align with the Subject Benchmark Statements and descriptors as prescribed in the FHEQ, and qualification guidance in relation to learning, skills and knowledge outcomes and levels. For collaborative provision this is the responsibility of the awarding body.

1.44 The College ensures that, prior to distribution, documentation is verified by allocated personnel to ensure learning outcomes and opportunities are maximised. Both internal and external verification policies and handbooks are in place. The College ensures that all documentation remains subject to external examiner and internal verifier feedback and guidance.

1.45 There are effective processes for the monitoring of academic thresholds and standards through the awarding bodies and Pearson. With the secure verification policies for provision delivered by the College the Expectation would be met.

1.46 The team considered documentation, including annual review documentation, and programme specifications from Pearson and the awarding bodies. In addition, internal and external verification policies and documentation were reviewed. The team also met staff and students to discuss their involvement in these processes.

1.47 Programmes are reviewed annually and periodically through the requirements of each university partner. Approval and review processes are recorded and reported by the universities and the College participates in the resulting action plans.

1.48 The College undertakes programme monitoring through the annual curriculum planning process. In addition, Pearson awards are subject to its audit and approval procedures and regulations.

1.49 The team considers that there is effective monitoring of academic thresholds and standards for the provision delivered at the College. The Expectation is met with a low risk.

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

1.50 The awarding bodies and Pearson have ultimate responsibility for making use of external and independent expertise to set and maintain academic standards. For the awarding bodies this is typically achieved through the attendance of an independent external academic on their programme approval panels. The direct involvement of the universities in convening these approval panels for the College's provision also provides them with an opportunity to ensure that programmes are in accordance with their own academic standards. In the case of courses which are seeking PSRB accreditation it is normal for the awarding bodies to engage the PSRB directly in the course development process and/or on the approval panel.

1.51 For its Higher National awards the College uses the programme specifications and rules of combination that have been developed by Pearson. Although Pearson has responsibility for involving external and independent expertise to ensure that these align with the FHEQ and that appropriate threshold academic standards have been set, it is the responsibility of the College to work in conjunction with them to ensure that these standards are delivered and maintained. This is achieved through close working with the external examiner appointed by Pearson for each programme. The awarding bodies also appoint independent academics as external examiners to ensure that the academic standards delivered on their programmes by the College are appropriate.

1.52 These arrangements have the capacity to ensure that external and independent expertise is used effectively to set and maintain academic standards and would meet the Expectation.

1.53 The team considered examples of approval documents from the validating universities, and programme specifications and the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment for Pearson awards. The team read a range of documentation regarding the involvement of external examiners in all awards. The team also spoke to senior staff and representatives from the awarding bodies.

1.54 The review team found these processes to be working effectively in practice. There is evidence of external representation at approval events and the engagement of a PSRB and employers in course development. As described under Expectation B7, external examiners are appropriately involved in the key stages of the assessment process, the sampling of marked student work, attendance at examination boards, and the submission of annual reports.

1.55 From the evidence provided the review team was able to see the College's involvement in the processes put in place by the awarding bodies and Pearson, to set and maintain academic standards and make use of independent external expertise. The team was also able to confirm how external expertise is being used to maintain academic

standards. The team concludes that these processes are effective and that the Expectation is met and the risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.57 All seven Expectations are met with a low level of risk. The review team makes one substantive recommendation in A2.2 and a second cross-referenced with Section C. There is a further cross-referenced recommendation to B1 in Expectation A2.1.

1.58 The College ensures that academic levels within programme specifications align with the FHEQ and that subject and qualification benchmarks are effectively taken into account in the maintenance of qualifications. In addition, programmes have clearly defined learning outcomes and these align with the relevant qualification descriptors.

1.59 There is no clear academic rationale for the College's range of Pearson programmes and ongoing changes. The processes do not refer to a definitive document and its approval. The review team considers that the College needs to strengthen and formalise the processes for the academic approval of Pearson programmes. This is also referred to under Expectation B1 where the team makes a recommendation. In addition, information about modified programmes is not held in a single location nor managed centrally by the College. The team recommends that the College review and formalise the process for the modification and recording of definitive documents for Pearson programmes by September 2016.

1.60 In addition, the review team makes a recommendation related to this area under Expectation C and information provided in all programme handbooks.

1.61 The College has developed new regulations and template agendas for the management of Pearson examination boards. These are designed to ensure that the College takes ownership of the assessment process and brings consistency of approach.

1.62 All programmes are monitored and approved through the annual curriculum planning process and the College operates systems that ensure that assessment is effective in allowing learning outcomes to be achieved at an appropriate standard, and that credit and qualifications are awarded in accordance with the achievement of these learning outcomes.

1.63 The College's involvement in both the processes of the awarding bodies and Pearson in the use of independent external expertise confirms to the review team that external expertise is being applied effectively to maintain academic standards.

1.64 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation 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 has procedures to identify, design and develop new programmes, including a course proposal process with associated documentation. For franchise and validated provision the Director of Quality works with the universities to identify potential new programmes, and ensures that processes are within their regulations. Standardised criteria are applied and formal planning and validation meetings held with senior management and other staff. The development process includes market research, resource planning, teaching and learning planning and consultation with students and stakeholders. Approval for new partnership delivery is subject to university partner processes, including proposal and validation procedures.

2.2 For directly funded programmes, College processes are consistent with those required by Pearson. Responsibility is shared between the College and Pearson, who provide general programme specifications for its awards. The College teaching teams determine the content of the programme to be delivered following Pearson Centre guidance and the Rules of Combination as prescribed by Pearson. Students are involved in these processes.

2.3 The processes for programme design, development and approval would enable the Expectation to be met, as the required procedures of the awarding bodies and organisation are followed and a range of stakeholders are involved, including staff, students and employers. Internal processes are in place for the selection and approval of directly funded programmes.

2.4 The team examined policies and programme proposal and approval minutes. The team also met students and staff involved in programme approval processes.

2.5 Partnership procedures govern the design and approval of university partnership programmes and meet awarding body and awarding organisation requirements. Staff reported that there is an annual curriculum planning process, with design increasingly informed by industry practice. The review team found that staff from the College had taken part in the development of programmes, been involved in meetings with university tutors and programme leaders, and attended approval panel meetings along with external stakeholders.

2.6 Students are involved in consultation when programme changes are being considered and some had participated in the development of new provision. Students and staff reported examples of changes made to programmes, including HND Sport Coaching and Development and HND Photography, as a result of student consultation.

2.7 Approval for new or amended directly funded provision is made in two stages, with final approval taking place as part of the curriculum-planning cycle. The review team found that the programme specifications available from Pearson were not contextualised with respect to each specific programme, although contextualisation is achieved through delivery.

This was confirmed in meetings with staff. The team **recommends** that the College strengthen and formalise the processes for the academic approval of Pearson programmes by September 2016.

2.8 The College works with awarding bodies to adhere to prescribed processes for the development and approval of partnership programmes. For directly funded programmes the College has processes in place to ensure that programmes are effectively designed, developed and approved before delivery. The documentation produced by the College for directly funded provision does not include contextualised information relevant to the specific programme. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is met with a moderate 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

2.9 The College's recruitment and admissions policy is underpinned by the Learning Group Strategic Plan. In addition, there is an Advice, Guidance and Careers Education Policy, Admissions Policy and Recruitment Policy, which are subject to Equality Impact Analysis. Entry requirements are determined by awarding bodies and the College. The College advocates widening participation and an inclusive approach. At the time of the review visit there was a decline in part-time student numbers, with full-time students remaining steady.

2.10 Applications to the College are supported by regular taster sessions at which the College introduces its higher education programmes to prospective students from schools and further education. Students are provided with a Higher Education and Professional Course Guide to help them make appropriate programme decisions.

2.11 Full-time higher education students are encouraged to apply through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) while part-time students are encouraged to apply direct to the College. Guidance on the application process is available through the College website and in published copy. Students are made aware of admissions arrangements by individual Learning and Skills Managers and Higher Education Programme Leaders. Applicants are encouraged to attend information events where more detailed programme information is provided. For students progressing internally, the College's Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) team conducts workshop activities that support them with admissions and recruitment information. The IAG team is in the Student Experience Directorate and works closely with the marketing team and academic staff to provide advice that is timely, accurate and appropriate.

2.12 The criteria for student admissions are explained in the Admissions Policy along with information on selection, rejection, exceptional circumstances and appeals. Prior learning is taken into account through the application of the Initial Assessment Policy and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. Decisions are usually given to applicants at interview and should an applicant be unsuccessful an alternative programme is normally offered.

2.13 Students undergo a comprehensive induction process which includes a general College induction and others specifically tailored to their programmes. University partners also provide campus visits for the new students.

2.14 The recruitment and admissions processes adhere to the requirements of the Quality Code and are informed by the strategic priorities of the College, thus satisfying the Expectation. Results from the National Student Survey (NSS) attest to students' satisfaction as the score is above the national benchmark despite the College's internal Questionnaire Data Processing survey scores for admissions being below the national benchmark.

2.15 The review team considered the College's documentation and a student submission provided for this review. In addition, the team examined evidence relating to the College's Admissions Policy; Recruitment Policy; Tuition Fee Policy 2015-16; the Advice Guidance

and Careers Education policy; the Entry Requirement Information for both Collaborative and Directly Funded Programmes; Initial Assessment Policy; Recognition of Prior Learning Policy; the Ethical Approval Policy and sample programme information and a Higher Education and Professional Course Guide. These policies are derived from the Learning Group Strategic Plan 2015-18, the Higher Education Curriculum Plan and informed by the College's three-year recruitment trend data and the Stakeholder Feedback Report 2014-15 (Employer Survey).

2.16 The team also explored the structures to support the recruitment process and met support staff, students and alumni to discuss the recruitment process.

2.17 The team was informed that the College has two designated higher education admissions advisers who help with the recruitment process. Students gave varied responses regarding the usefulness of information provided at recruitment. Some students said that they found information difficult to obtain. However, other students felt well supported especially when progressing to higher education at the College. Students who were concerned informed the review team of duplication of requests from the College and the awarding bodies, and information regarding finance. These concerns were recognised by staff at the College. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure the clarity and consistency of information and guidance provided to students on recruitment, selection and admission by September 2016.

2.18 The team concludes that the College has appropriate recruitment and admissions policies and procedures but needs to ensure greater clarity in the processes as there is a disparity in information. The team concludes that the Expectation is met with a moderate level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.19 In 2013-14, the College introduced a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy that is the responsibility of the Vice Principal (Learning, Standards and Outcomes) and which is implemented at all levels across the organisation. Directors of Learning and Skills in collaboration with the Quality Team are responsible for ensuring the quality of learning and teaching provision within their subject areas. Discussion of issues related to learning, teaching and assessment takes place at Directorate Team meetings and through the annual monitoring process. Ultimately, the Learning, Quality and Standards Committee, a subcommittee of the College's Governing Body, has oversight of learning and teaching, enhanced practice and the learner experience.

2.20 All staff are appropriately qualified to at least one level above that which they teach and have extensive experience within their specialist subject. Those responsible for university franchised and validated programme delivery are subject to approval by university partners. In the case of Pearson qualifications, the standards verifier completes an audit of all staff qualifications during the initial visit and on an annual basis thereafter.

2.21 Through the College's Staff Development Policy all staff members are encouraged to identify and undertake development and training opportunities relating to both learning and teaching and their subject specialism. The College also works with its partner universities to ensure staff may access appropriate partner training opportunities and scholarly activity. All higher education teachers participate in Learning and Teaching observation processes, and training for those undertaking observation activity is conducted on an annual basis.

2.22 External speakers and industry experts are used in programme delivery to enrich the student experience, provide sector intelligence, and enhance work experience and employability of the student cohort. In some cases this leads to commercial work being undertaken by students.

2.23 These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.24 The team reviewed the effectiveness of the teaching and learning procedures by examining a range of documentation including the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the Staff Development Policy, records of continuing professional development (CPD) and teaching observation, the student submission and online resources. The team also held meetings with students, alumni, and management, teaching and support staff.

2.25 Evidence from the student submission and meetings with students and alumni confirms that they are satisfied with their higher education learning and teaching experience. The NSS score in 2014-15 for those questions related to teaching matches the national average of 86 per cent and the score for those questions related to assessment and feedback was 88 per cent compared to a national average of 73 per cent. Students met by the review team placed emphasis on how their curriculum and learning experiences were

particularly effective in preparing them for employment and in the high quality support provided by academic staff.

2.26 Most of the College's processes for the management of learning and teaching in further and higher education are integrated. For example, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy does not make explicit reference to higher education and the annual monitoring process culminates in a single Quality Improvement Plan incorporating both further and higher education issues. In this regard the review team sometimes found it difficult to identify within the documentary evidence provided the explicit consideration of higher education learning and teaching. However, students state that they are stretched by higher education study and that it becomes more challenging as they progress through their programme. This was confirmed by the students met by the review team. In particular, those students who had previously studied on a further education programme at the College appreciated how they were gaining confidence in their learning and being stretched academically.

2.27 Students confirmed that they have access to course materials, including module guides, on the College's VLE, which they find useful. However, the students noted that its use of it by staff is variable. In the case of university awards, academic staff confirmed that the awarding institutions' VLEs can also be used by students. When viewing the College's VLE the review team was able to see its extensive use as a repository of information but saw fewer examples of its use as an interactive learning tool.

2.28 Because of the integration of further and higher education processes, it was not always apparent in the documentation provided which CPD activities were specifically aimed at supporting higher education provision. There was also limited awareness among academic staff of the opportunities offered by the Higher Education Academy. However, the review team was provided with examples where CPD activities had a higher education focus, including a collaborative provision conference organised by one of the partner universities.

2.29 The teaching observation strategy, which uses a pro forma that maps against Ofsted criteria, does not make specific reference to higher education. However, in this instance the review team heard how observations were contextualised for higher education and of the recent identification of Learning and Teaching Champions some of whom have a higher education focus.

2.30 While the College's management of higher education learning and teaching is closely integrated with that of further education, students perceive their experience to be distinctive, challenging and effective in developing their learning and employability skills. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.31 The College works with its university partners and other local colleges to support access to higher education for its students and those studying in local schools. All students are subject to initial assessment when they join the College to identify additional support needs. Students are provided with a course induction, including one by the respective awarding body in the case of university courses. They also receive library inductions and attend information skills sessions with the option of attending additional one-to-one or group sessions throughout the year to improve their referencing and online retrieval skills.

2.32 The College's formal tutorial system provides for three student review weeks during the academic cycle which give an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning experience, and to set and monitor their progress against learning targets. The College also has a College-wide Learner Support Policy and provides central support for those with specific needs.

2.33 Subject-specific resources are the responsibility of Directors of Learning and Skills who are allocated a budget to provide for the requirements of both higher and further education. Walk-through observations by members of the College Support Services (Group Director) are carried out to ensure that any issues related to the College's physical, virtual and social environments are addressed. Library resources are funded from a central budget which has a separate provision for higher education and Access courses. Programme Leaders inform the College's Librarian about specific needs for printed books, e-books and journals, and tutors are encouraged to recommend learning resources specifically for higher education programmes. Students can also make direct requests to the library staff. Library services are made available to students as part of the university partnership arrangements.

2.34 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.35 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements and resources by reading relevant documents including the Learner Support Policy, the student submission and the College Stakeholder Feedback Report. The team gained evidence from meetings held with College managers, academic and support staff, and current students and alumni.

2.36 The student submission and the academic staff met by the review team confirmed the induction arrangements in place for all students. However, students reported some variability in their experience of these with some indicating that there had been confusion between what was covered in the induction at the awarding body compared to the one provided by the College. However, all agreed that the support provided in their broader induction had been effective in making them aware of the expectations of study in higher education.

2.37 In addition to confirming that they receive their entitlement to formal tutorials, students highlighted the accessibility of academic staff, their willingness to provide support when required and the high quality of the support provided. Students and alumni also commented on the effectiveness of the support and opportunities that they had received to develop their employability skills. This was endorsed by the high level of satisfaction for personal development - 90 per cent in the NSS, nine per cent above the national average.

The high level of support provided by academic staff for students' academic, personal and professional development is **good practice**.

2.38 The review team noted that the NSS score for the provision of learning resources was 11 per cent below the national average at 74 per cent, although the student submission and students met by the review team suggested that they are at least adequate and in some cases, such as the new Creative Arts and Media facilities on the Nuneaton campus, excellent. The review team also notes that the College has taken steps to provide dedicated spaces for higher education study. The team heard that students are in most instances satisfied with their access to library resources, including those students accessing them via the awarding bodies. Where deficiencies have been identified, for example in the Foundation Degree in Working with Communities and Young People annual report, these are being addressed. The procedures for providing learning resources, including the processes for identifying and providing library resources, appear to be effective in meeting the needs of students.

2.39 The College has effective procedures in place to ensure that students have access to appropriate support and resources to enable their development and achievement. The team identified one feature of good practice relating to the high level of support given to students by the College's academic staff. The review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.40 The College's Student Engagement Strategy outlines how it engages students through consultation, participation and representation. It explains the roles of student representatives, ambassadors, governors and Students' Union executives. In addition, there is information about the effective use of the student voice through focus groups, surveys, the student parliament and course surveys. The College has also involved students in developing the Higher Education Enhancement Strategy to maximise student engagement in programme assessment processes and the Higher Education Student Forums.

2.41 The College has a Students' Union model which students are made aware of during their induction. The College has two elected student governors one of whom is a higher education student. Training and support is provided to the elected student body from the College's Student Experience Team. Student representatives attend the Student Parliament and Learner Voice meetings and can raise issues for discussion with the College's senior managers.

2.42 Student engagement is reviewed through the assessment of student engagement activities and the self-assessment reporting process. Students contribute to the self-assessment processes, module evaluations and collaborative reviews. They can also contribute informally and through feedback and targeted questionnaires to the content of programmes during the design phases. In addition, student review weeks are located at three points during the academic year and enable students to reflect on their learning. In recognition of students' work, the College celebrates and acknowledges student achievement by hosting an annual higher education and professional awards event for graduating students.

2.43 The above processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.44 The review team considered the Student Involvement Strategy 2014-15 and its effectiveness in securing student engagement. Other key evidence reviewed included the Student Union Constitution, the College Higher Education Enhancement Strategy, the Stakeholder Feedback Report, the Student Experience Team Self-Assessment Report 2014-15 and the Student Representative Specification and Guidance. The team also referred to the student submission, minutes of Learner Voice meetings, and Student Parliament minutes for evidence of how students considered they were engaged through representational structures. In addition, the team met the Principal, staff and students to discuss student engagement.

2.45 In meetings with students, the team explored their awareness of the role of student representatives and the Students' Union. From these meetings the team found that the training of student representatives was not consistent and there were variations evident across College campuses. The team therefore **recommends** that the College provides training and support for all student representatives to enable them to engage fully in quality assurance and enhancement processes by September 2016.

2.46 The team found that students value the opportunities at the College to express their views but that engagement through student representative meetings is variable. Students consider they are able to contribute their views on programmes but that the College could

make the outcomes and actions taken following student feedback more clearly available. Students also reported that their engagement in meetings is inconsistent and differs between cohorts due to time and employment restraints.

2.47 Students were not always clear about their involvement in contributing to the quality of their learning and the purpose of module evaluation forms to improve provision. However, in meetings with the team they were able to identify some specific examples, including involvement with self-assessment and the NSS. They reported that they are advised informally of changes to provision following feedback and these included development of programmes, assessment of learning, and resources specific for higher education students.

2.48 The team concludes that the measures taken by the College to engage students should be further developed, in particular the training of student representatives to improve student engagement with quality assurance and enhancement processes. The Expectation is met with moderate risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.49 The College has an Assessment Policy and an Academic Assessment and Appeals Policy, together with an Initial Assessment Policy which applies to all students.

2.50 For partnership provision, assessment documentation used is specific to each awarding body, setting out systematic processes to be followed. Collaborative partner assessment guidance is in some cases embedded within an overall collaborative document. There is a general learning, teaching and assessment policy, as well as plagiarism and malpractice policies.

2.51 Staff receive awarding body guidance on assessment processes. Programme specifications and programme handbooks give information on assessment expectations for students, including the appeals process. Assessment is designed in conjunction with the awarding body, and is planned at appropriate points in the programme and communicated to students via assignment briefs. College policies set out procedures for internal and external verification.

2.52 Examination boards for partnership provision are systematically held and minuted and awards verified by external examination. Staff receive guidance regarding the conduct of examinations at the College.

2.53 For directly funded provision, the College's Assessment Policy and the Academic Assessment and Appeals Policy, plagiarism and malpractice policies outline the implementation of the Pearson framework for assessment. General principles and guides to good assessment practice are in the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Assignment briefs are internally and externally verified in line with College policy.

2.54 Assessment boards are held for Pearson programmes. The College has introduced assessment board regulations which include requirements for membership and terms of reference as well as a standardised agenda to ensure objective and independent conduct of these boards. Assessment is carried out within a framework provided by Pearson, which details the College's responsibilities, including the planning and design of assessments, grading, internal verification and holding of assessment boards. Assessment processes specific to each awarding body and Pearson are implemented and are effective in meeting the Expectation.

2.55 The team reviewed a number of policies including those governing assessment, appeals and plagiarism and examination misconduct, and an example of collaborative partner assessment guidance. Assignment and assessment documents were scrutinised including those demonstrating verification procedures. Assessment schedules were considered and assessment board documentation was examined for partnership programmes as well as for Pearson provision. Staff guidance was reviewed for the conduct of examinations. Programme specifications and programme handbooks were examined for relevant information regarding assessment. Both students and staff were asked about assessment processes and practice in meetings with the review team.

2.56 The evidence reviewed by the team confirmed that the relevant assessment processes are followed and are being effectively applied. Assignment and assessment documents demonstrate that assessment implementation and verification procedures are being followed. Assessment schedules are used and assessment boards are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the awarding organisation. Guidance for the conduct of examinations is provided for College staff.

2.57 Programme specifications and programme handbooks provide relevant information regarding assessment. In meetings with the review team, students confirmed that they are able to access assessment criteria on the VLE and also in hard copy. Assignment briefs include learning outcomes and are explained by tutors. Students confirmed that they consider their assessments are fair and consistent, with opportunities to discuss assessment outcomes and ways to improve their grades.

2.58 Students on university programmes are confident that the assessments conducted are fair. They report that they receive ample formative feedback on their work as well as summative feedback. Some students expressed concerns about the time taken to have work returned and to receive feedback, but others did not regard this as a general problem. Students are aware of their entitlement to timely feedback and consider that this is met or exceeded in almost all cases. Part-time students report that they receive timely feedback and also have ample formative feedback from tutors and opportunities to improve their work.

2.59 Staff confirmed that assessment and moderation procedures are in accordance with awarding body and Pearson requirements. Assessment plans are documented and implemented conscientiously, including scheduled meetings for internal verification and with external moderators for Pearson provision.

2.60 Assessment processes deliver equitable, valid and reliable assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning. The evidence considered by the review team confirmed that College processes are effective in enabling students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the ILOs for the credit or qualification being sought. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.61 Pearson and the partner universities take responsibility for the appointment of external examiners for each of their awards and define their roles and responsibilities. The external examiners are required to sample student work and confirm that academic standards have been met in accordance with the FHEQ and relevant benchmark statements.

2.62 External examiners usually visit annually, at the end of the programme cycle, and are managed by programme teams with the assistance of the Quality Team, and the Director of Quality. Prior to their visit they are sent relevant policies and procedures and during their initial visit new external examiners are normally provided with a short induction and orientation session.

2.63 In the case of franchised and validated university programmes, external examiners are required to attend relevant examination boards at either the College or the university and the universities are directly involved and provide support during their visits. External examiners for Pearson programmes are entitled to attend assessment boards although it is not a requirement.

2.64 External examiners identify areas of strength and those for improvement through the production of a formal report. The Enhancement Strategy states that programme teams, Directors of Learning and Skills and the Quality Assurance Team all consider comments made by external examiners and that response to these is the responsibility of the Directors of Learning and Skills in partnership with the programme team and the Director of Quality. Actions for improvement are incorporated within the Directorate Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs).

2.65 External examiners are encouraged to meet students during their visit. The intention is that reports are made available to students via the VLE, and are further discussed within programmes and as part of the Learner Voice process.

2.66 The procedures described by the College, and its adherence to those of its awarding bodies, would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.67 The review team considered the effectiveness of these procedures in practice by examining a range of documentation, including external examiner reports and associated responses, and minutes of meetings at which issues raised by external examiners had been discussed. The team also spoke with College staff and students regarding the processes involved.

2.68 External examiner reports use pro formas provided by each of the awarding bodies and Pearson. These are effective in enabling external examiners to confirm whether academic standards are appropriate and to provide them with an opportunity to recommend areas of potential improvement and identify instances of good practice. The review team also saw evidence of external examiners' attendance at assessment boards where appropriate.

2.69 The responses to and action plans arising from external examiner reports take a variety of different forms according to the particular awarding body or, in the case of Pearson awards, the discipline area and Directorate in which they are located. These are effective in enabling programme teams to identify and respond to issues related to their provision.

However, there is some variability in the extent to which action plans identify who is responsible and by when for particular actions, with this being more effective in some cases, for example for HND Travel and Tourism and FDA Early Years and Learning Support. In all cases where external examiners have identified issues that have led to Pearson awards being temporarily blocked, the action planning process has been effective and timely in having these blocks removed.

2.70 Although the student submission corroborated the College's statement that students were aware of external examiners' visits and the access provided to their reports, there was considerable variation in terms of the awareness of students met by the review team with most being unfamiliar with the role of the external examiner. Viewing of the VLE by the review team and discussion with students also confirmed that external examiner reports are not as readily accessible to students as suggested by the Higher Education Staff Handbook. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by September 2016, the College ensures students are aware of and guided to external examiners' reports.

2.71 The College makes scrupulous use of the external examiners appointed by the awarding bodies and Pearson. This is achieved through processes which allow effective responses to be made to the issues raised by external examiners in the reports they are required to submit. The team makes one recommendation regarding the accessibility of information about external examiners to students. The review team concludes that Expectation B7 is met and that the associated level of risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.72 Programme monitoring and review is overseen by the Deputy Principal and the Directors of Learning and Skills. The College self-assessment process is documented and includes guidance for staff. The College produces an overall self-assessment report (SAR) covering all levels and subject sectors of provision.

2.73 Higher education programmes are subject to the self-assessment and curriculum planning processes of the College. Academic staff are responsible for the monitoring and review of programmes, while strategic oversight is with the Deputy Principal in consultation with Directors of Learning and Skills and the Director of Quality. The College aims to secure full involvement in programme monitoring and review by all stakeholders.

2.74 Staff undertake annual programme-level self-assessment in which the focus is specifically on Pearson programmes, leading to the production of action plans for each programme which are moderated and approved by the Deputy Principal in consultation with Directors of Learning and Skills and the Director of Quality. These reviews feed into the College self-assessment in which annual monitoring of programmes is incorporated within each subject sector area. Programmes are scrutinised and approved using defined criteria, including viability, employer influence and employability. Self-assessment is subject to a validation process.

2.75 College staff contribute to the annual and periodic review processes of partner university programmes. Interim and periodic reviews are conducted in accordance with partner requirements and action plans drawn up. The processes are governed by the regulations of the awarding bodies. Students also contribute to the self-assessment process, complete module evaluation and are involved in collaborative partner reviews.

2.76 The design enables effective review and monitoring. For collaborative programmes the requirements of partner awarding bodies for annual monitoring and review are followed by the College. For Pearson programmes there is an effective system of programme-level review, which is then incorporated into the overall self-assessment of the College.

2.77 The review team examined documents which set out the processes and procedures for annual monitoring and examples of annual self-assessment reviews, improvement plans and strategies, including QIPs and the College's SAR. The team also examined programme-level self-assessment documentation for a range of Pearson programmes, as well as partnership annual monitoring and review documentation, module evaluation documentation and student voice feedback.

2.78 The team also considered documentation for collaborative provision, including examples of periodic review and self-assessment validation event documentation. The review team discussed the College's approach to programme monitoring and review with senior and academic staff and students.

2.79 Annual and periodic review of collaborative programmes is conducted effectively and in accordance with awarding body procedures. The College has appropriate policies and procedures in place for the annual monitoring of its directly funded academic provision.

2.80 Documents examined relating to self-assessment and annual monitoring and review, including QIPs and the College SAR demonstrate effective implementation of required processes. The effective use of programme-level self-assessment documentation for Pearson programmes ensures a specific focus on these programmes within the College before integration with the overall College SAR.

2.81 Documentation reviewed by the team for collaborative provision, including examples of periodic review and self-assessment validation event documentation, demonstrates effective implementation by the College. Senior staff, academic staff and students confirmed their confidence in the College's approach to programme monitoring and review.

2.82 The use of programme-level self-assessment is embedded in a systematic fashion, and allows a detailed focus on programmes which could otherwise be diluted in the overall College self-assessment. The College's approach to periodic monitoring is less well developed and the team makes a recommendation in section A2.2.

2.83 Annual and periodic review of programmes is effective and in accordance with awarding body procedures. The College has appropriate policies and procedures in place for the annual monitoring of its academic provision. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met in both design and operation, and the associated level of risk in this area 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

2.84 The College has a Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and an Academic Assessment and Appeals Policy. They are available to students in hard copy and through the College's VLE. Students are made aware of the complaints and appeals procedures during induction and they are included in student handbooks. The Director of Quality liaises with partner awarding bodies in the resolution of any complaints and appeals.

2.85 The College's processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.86 The team scrutinised key documents regarding academic appeals and student complaints. These included the Academic Assessment and Appeals Policy, the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy, the Consumer Rights overview and checking process and the Student Involvement Strategy. In addition, the team looked at the processes that had been taken by the College following a formal student complaint, reviewed the appeals processes, and met staff and students to discuss the appeals and complaints processes.

2.87 In its meetings with students the review team found that there was inconsistent awareness of the formal appeals and complaints procedures. However, students informed the team that most complaints are resolved informally due to the openness in communication with their tutors and other College staff and that they are aware there are formal procedures should they wish to use them. The College provided the review team with evidence of an academic appeal within the last three years and how this had been resolved with the awarding body at an early stage. In addition, the College confirmed the application of systems to record student complaints and appeals.

2.88 The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.89 The College introduces its students to the world of work through work placement and apprenticeships and learning is delivered to a limited extent in the workplace. The College has clear procedures for checking the suitability of workplace learning.

2.90 The College requires all courses to have aspects of work-based learning. In some cases students are in employment while studying and in others there is an expectation that students will complete a set period of work experience. For instance, the HNC Business and HNC Computing awards with Pearson expect students to spend one day a week with an employer. In the case of Warwick University's Diploma in Education and Learning awards there is an expectation that students are employed for a minimum of 100 hours over two years. The University of West London programmes require students to be in work which involves the appointment of mentors, and De Montfort University also has programmes with work-based learning as an essential component.

2.91 The College plays an active part in the maintenance and review of its partnerships with employers in providing learning opportunities through work placements. The College has procedures that apply to the monitoring of work-based learning and work placements. It works with employers in the delivery of its higher education provision. Oversight and management of employer relationships is the responsibility of the Quality Administrator who has the responsibility to coordinate work experience and project-based learning and to monitor compliance with internal procedures.

2.92 The College ensures that all employers and placement providers are managing the risks in their workplaces and it checks that this is correct. There is also a check to ascertain if there any additional needs of young persons or vulnerable adults. The College has a process to agree the suitability of work placements.

2.93 The team tested the effectiveness of delivering learning opportunities in conjunction with other organisations by examining documentation related to work placements and work-based learning and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and senior staff, including representatives from the awarding bodies.

2.94 The College has written a guide for assessing Health and Safety for Work Placements and Apprenticeships, which references standards of approach from The Health and Safety Executive and *The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999* to ensure compatibility with safety regulations.

2.95 The College is effective in agreeing and monitoring the responsibilities of employers during workplace learning activities and requires all employers to enter an agreement to meet agreed standards of practice. This places obligations on the work placement provider to operate safe systems of work and have appropriate arrangements in place to manage risk. In addition it limits the activities that the learner can legitimately engage in while on work placement. The team found that the College has appropriate processes for agreeing the suitability of work placements.

2.96 The team found these procedures to be carried out with due diligence and applied appropriately to ensure learning opportunities are implemented securely and managed effectively.

2.97 In addition the review team recognises that the College is involved in innovative practices with employers. Spin-top Media is an inventive and original creative media company supported by the College to give students from Graphic Design, Moving Image, Games Design and Photography real world experience. This has been set up and led by College higher education students. The exceptional entrepreneurial experience provided by the College through partnerships with employers in the creative industries is **good practice**.

2.98 The team concludes that arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with other organisations are implemented securely and managed effectively. The Expectation is met and 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*

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.100 In reaching its judgements about the quality of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.101 All 10 applicable Expectations in this area are met, three with a moderate risk under Expectations B1, B2, and B5.

2.102 There are four recommendations in this area, which relate to the Expectations above and in addition Expectation B7. There are two features of good practice in B4 and B10.

2.103 There is a high level of support provided by academic staff at the College for students' academic, personal and professional development (B4) and an exceptional entrepreneurial experience through partnerships with employers in the creative industries (B10). Each of these are good practice.

2.104 The first recommendation in this area relates to Expectation B1 and the review team found that the Pearson programme specifications are not contextualised with respect to specific programmes. The team recommends that the College strengthen and formalise the processes for the academic approval of Pearson programmes by September 2016.

2.105 The review team's second recommendation is concerned with Expectation B2 where the team found students had difficulty in obtaining information on recruitment, selection and admission and there was duplication of requests from the College and the awarding bodies. The review team recommends that the College ensures the clarity and consistency of information and guidance provided to students on recruitment, selection and admission by September 2016.

2.106 A further recommendation relates to Expectation B5 where the team found that the training of student representatives is not consistent and there are variations evident across College campuses. The team therefore recommends that the College provides training and support for all student representatives to enable them to engage fully in quality assurance and enhancement processes by September 2016.

2.107 The final recommendation in this area is with regard to Expectation B7. The review team's viewing of the College's VLE and meetings with students confirmed that external examiner reports are not as readily accessible to students as suggested by the Higher Education Staff Handbook. The review team therefore recommends that, by September 2016, the College ensures students are aware of and guided to external examiners' reports.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College publishes both strategic and programme-level information on its website and in hard copy. This includes the Prospectus for Higher Education and Professional Course Guide, the Full-time Course Guide, the Career Step Guide and the Distance and Blended Learning Course Guide. The decisions about the management of the College's information are informed by the Marketing Strategy and Social Media Communications Policy. There is a three-step information checking process to provide appropriate scrutiny, approval and final sign-off by the College Executive Team.

3.2 The College provides students with clear and current information regarding its higher education programmes. The information checking procedures ensure accurate and relevant student information. The College website clearly signposts additional support services with contact details for students. At induction, students receive programme handbooks, programme specifications, module information and assignment briefs. They are also directed to the relevant policies regarding plagiarism, information technology, health and safety, and complaints and appeals. Information about external examiner reports is made available on the VLE. On completion of their programme, transcripts and certification are made available to students.

3.3 Students are provided with the relevant information to enable them to make appropriate decisions about which programmes to pursue, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 The review team looked at a range of published information about the process and policies of the College, including programme handbooks. The team received a demonstration of the College's VLE and the 'Box' which is an online communication platform used by staff and students. In addition, the team met staff and students.

3.5 There are clear information guidelines which are reviewed by the College and checked for accuracy. To raise awareness and information about the Quality Code the College has developed a Higher Education Staff Handbook, and the review team **affirms** the alignment of the Higher Education Staff Handbook to the Quality Code and the steps being taken to promote it to staff.

3.6 In their submission to the review team, students considered some improvements could be made to the College's website. They considered that information and links on the UCAS site should direct the applicant straight to the course information instead of the home page to make the application process less complicated. In its meetings with students the review team found that they had an inconsistent awareness of handbooks and their accessibility. The team reviewed a range of handbooks and found inconsistencies and noted that a previous IQER report from QAA had advised the College about the content of course handbooks. The team therefore **recommends** that the College ensure the standardisation of information provided in all programme handbooks by September 2016.

3.7 The College stated that it monitors and reviews the use and application of the VLE and identifies areas that require action and development. However, the review team found that the VLE is not consistently populated and some key information, including external examiners' reports, is not always uploaded.

3.8 While noting the inconsistencies in the student handbooks and information published on the VLE, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met with a low risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

- 3.9 In reaching its judgements on the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The one Expectation in this area is met with a low level of risk.
- 3.10 There is one recommendation and the review team also makes an affirmation.
- 3.11 The review team found that the information provided by the College about its higher education provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.
- 3.12 The College publishes both strategic and programme-level information on its website and in hard copy and there is an effective information-checking process to provide appropriate scrutiny, approval and final sign-off by the College Executive Team.
- 3.13 Students have clear and current information regarding higher education programmes and the range of additional support provided by the College.
- 3.14 To raise awareness and information about the Quality Code, the College has developed a Higher Education Staff Handbook and the review team affirms the alignment of the Handbook to the Quality Code and the steps being taken to promote it to staff.
- 3.15 However, the review team found inconsistencies in a range of student handbooks and noted that a previous IQER report from QAA had advised the College about the content of course handbooks. The team therefore recommends that the College ensure the standardisation of information provided in all programme handbooks by September 2016.
- 3.16 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 Enhancement Strategy has been developed in dialogue with students, and is focused on their educational and employment needs within the local community. It contains twin strands of student voice and employability. It defines the short, medium and long-term objectives of higher education enhancement. The College commits to developing teaching practice, academic practice in scholarly activity, using educational technologies to best effect, supporting students' academic and professional skills development and meeting local and regional employer needs.

4.2 Quality processes at the College include students in programme and curriculum self-assessment and the College has introduced Higher Education Student Forums to enhance dialogue with students. This approach is articulated in the Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy. Higher education provision is also subject to the College's teaching observation process. Students provide formal feedback through the module evaluations and informally through Learner Voice activities and are enabled to identify enhancements to their teaching and learning.

4.3 Areas for improvement and enhancement identified by staff and students are addressed through the QIPs developed as part of programme-level self-assessment. These are subsequently integrated at College level in the SAR. For partnership programmes, the College contributes to the annual and periodic review process at the partner universities. The College has established an Employability Strategy and the curriculum is designed to enhance employment and career opportunities for students across a range of skill and professional career pathways. In addition, the College aims to support staff to develop their teaching practice, scholarly activity, and effective use of educational technologies. This approach would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.4 The review team scrutinised documents, including the Higher Education Enhancement Strategy, the College SAR, the Employability Strategy and the College Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy. The team also examined programme-level self-assessment documentation for a range of Pearson programmes, as well as partnership annual monitoring and review documentation, including QIPs, module evaluation documentation and student voice feedback.

4.5 The review team discussed the College's approach to enhancement with senior and academic staff and students.

4.6 The review team found that the College works closely with partner universities to support and enhance the student experience. Student-staff liaison meetings are held with universities, and an awarding body representative spoke of the positive and active relationship the university has with the College.

4.7 In addition, enhancement is evident in the programme and curriculum self-assessment processes and student module evaluation. The College recognises that the contribution by students can be sporadic and has identified this as an area for improvement. Students the team met were able to describe curriculum changes made in response to student feedback to support employability. The review team also found that the student learning experience is enhanced through QIPs developed as part of programme-level self-

assessment. Students also commented positively on their preparation for higher level study, timely and flexible access to tutors and effective and regular feedback to enable improvement. This is recognised by the review team as good practice under Expectation B4.

4.8 The review team found effective engagement of employers in programmes and as providers of placements. This was evident in Early Years and Youth Work and in the Creative Arts. Here, students are involved with the College business - Spin-top Media - and they described how this had supported their preparation for careers in the industry. Staff also commented that involvement in Spin-top Media had improved their pedagogic practice. This is recognised by the review team as good practice under Expectation B10. In addition, alumni whom the review team met confirmed that the College had prepared them well for work and establishing their own companies. They made particular reference to business modules and access to work placements relevant to their careers.

4.9 Through its systematic and planned processes the College takes deliberate steps to support enhancement. These are informed by a strategy based on the twin themes of employability and the student voice. In addition, the high level of support provided by academic staff for students' development and the positive relationship with partner awarding bodies each contribute to improve the quality of student learning opportunities.

4.10 The team considers that the Expectation is met with low risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.11 In reaching its judgements on the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The one Expectation in this area is met with a low level of risk.

4.12 There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this area. However there are two features of good practice reported in other sections that inform the review team's findings in this area.

4.13 The College Enhancement Strategy, developed in dialogue with students, focuses on their educational and employment needs and related strands of the student voice and employability. In addition, the quality processes at the College engage students in programme and curriculum self-assessment and Student Forums. This approach is articulated in the Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy.

4.14 Areas for improvement and enhancement identified by staff or students are addressed in QIPs developed as part of programme-level self-assessment. These are subsequently integrated in the College SAR.

4.15 The review team found that the College works closely with partner universities to support and enhance the student experience and contributes to their annual and periodic review process.

4.16 Students are able to describe curriculum changes made in response to their feedback and the review team found the student learning experience is enhanced through QIPs. Students also commented positively on their preparation for higher level study, timely and flexible access to tutors and effective and regular feedback to enable improvement. This is recognised by the review team as good practice under Expectation B4.

4.17 Likewise, the review team found effective engagement with employers and the preparation of students for employment and enterprise. This is recognised by the review team as good practice under Expectation B10. In addition, alumni confirmed how well the College had prepared them for work and establishing their own companies.

4.18 The College takes deliberate steps to support enhancement. These are informed by a strategy based on the twin themes of employability and the student voice. In addition, the high level of support provided by academic staff for students' development and the positive relationship with partner awarding bodies contributes to the quality of students' learning opportunities.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The theme of student employability was chosen by the students as being of particular significance to them. The College has developed its higher education curriculum to enhance employment and provide inspirational experiences for students and this has been borne out by the findings of the team.

5.2 The College recognises that employers are changing their approach to selecting employees so that recruitment practices are not based merely on qualifications but on the skills that make students more employable. Consequently, the College has produced an employability strategy which sets out aims, objectives and measures by which the College will embed employability skills into all programmes and develop strategic partnerships with employers and industry specialists.

5.3 The College takes an active role in involving employers in the design and modification of its curriculum. The College has had discussions with employers to enhance the curriculum, expand skill-based learning routes and develop higher education apprenticeships. The College has made this a priority for 2016-17. Employer views are gained through an annual College Employer Survey. In addition, there are strong links between teaching teams and employers. A number of students combine part-time study and full-time employment and this provides informal connections between the College and employers that has proved fruitful at an individual programme level. The Engineering and Early Years programmes have close links with employers through student contacts.

5.4 To provide a work-ready approach to student learning, the College employs a number of initiatives. These include placements within higher education programmes and a core work experience component in Pearson programmes. The College sets an expectation that all students have some element of work experience as part of their programme. Those students who do not have direct access to work experience are provided with a simulated experience within the College.

5.5 A further initiative which the College has taken is the creation of a new post of Quality Administrator which has the responsibility to coordinate work experience and project-based learning and to monitor compliance with internal procedures to ensure that all students have a well-planned work experience tracked by the College.

5.6 Further initiatives which the College has taken a lead in have included undertaking research funded by the Education and Training Foundation into the effects of employer-led delivery, which have led to a published research paper and presentation of this work at a conference. The College also uses employers to deliver master-classes with prestigious speakers and uses employers on validation panels and internal quality processes. Furthermore, an employer is a member of the College's Quality Team.

5.7 The College runs an annual higher education careers and recruitment event which is attended by local employers and voluntary organisations. The College also provides a careers guidance service to all students through the Marketing Team and has produced a Competitions Strategy to support innovative practice with employers which aims to embed competition-based learning and establish a competition-based culture to further develop employability skills. Spin-top Media is an innovative creative media company set up by the College and led by higher education students to give students from Graphic Design, Moving Image, Games Design and Photography real world experience.

5.8 The team found that the students are very happy with the steps that the College is taking to make them more employable. Students affirmed that employability is embedded in the curriculum and reported through their forum that work placement and work experience is a core part of their programmes. Students feel that employability is a core part of their learning experience and stated in meetings with the team that 'the College goes to any lengths' to make them employable. Students the team met felt that they were 'job ready' and that their experience with the College was in some cases 'life changing'. They were highly appreciative of the steps the College has taken to ensure their employability.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 30-33 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#)

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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