Higher Education Review of Northampton College

May 2016

Contents

About this review

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

- Mr Mark Cooper
- Ms Kate Wicklow (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Northampton 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 5.

In reviewing Northampton 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.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/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 Northampton College

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree awarding bodies and 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 Northampton College.

- The well-embedded and effective relationship between the College and the University of Northampton which enables a distinctive higher education student experience (Expectation A2.1, B3 and B4).

Recommendations

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

By September 2016:

- develop and implement a version control process to maintain the definitive record of programmes (Expectation A2.2 and C).

By October 2016:

- ensure all programmes have formal student representation and provide training to enable students to be effective advocates (Expectation B5)
- ensure that students can engage more widely as partners in the development of their educational experience (Expectation B5).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The action being taken to ensure that preparations for examination boards for Pearson programmes are timely (Expectation A3.2).

Theme: Student Employability

The College considers employability to be a strength of its provision and its activities are embedded within strategies of the College. The College works actively with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and engages with a number of employment and enterprise panels to input directly into the strategies for developing skills in the region. Employers are involved in the development of new programmes and programme teams are encouraged to

ensure skills based assessments are included in the overall learning outcomes of programmes. Programme teams work with local employers to enhance the student learning experience through work placements, master classes, workshops and live briefs. In addition, the College has a commitment to employing industry professionals and to offer them support to gain qualifications in developing their teaching practice.

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

About Northampton College

Northampton College (the College) is a general further education college in Northampton which offers further and higher education across a range of subject areas and attracts students from across Northamptonshire. The College has nearly 10,000 students, of whom 83 are registered on higher education programmes including Higher National Certificates and Diplomas and a Certificate and Diploma in Education and Training. The College has three campuses: the largest, at Booth Lane, is situated on the outskirts of the town and this building offers facilities for higher education students on their programmes. There is a smaller facility at Lower Mounts situated close to the town centre and a new building is due to be opened at the campus in Daventry in autumn 2016.

The College's mission is to: 'Enhance the lives of our students and other customers maximising their potential through learning'. It is stated that this will be achieved through the provision of education and training that meets the needs of students, other customers and employers; the consistent improvement of quality and student success; the effective delivery of contracts and the continuous improvement and development of resources and staff. The College's higher education strategic plan links into this and contains 12 objectives which offer direction to the planning of all higher education activities. The strategic plan highlights the importance of higher education as an area of growth for the College and its stakeholders and sets out the College's ambitions to become a prominent and highly regarded provider of higher education at local and regional level. A key priority for the College is the development of programmes led by industry need and employer demand which encourages wider participation from members of the local community who might not otherwise consider higher education an option.

The strategic direction of the College is set and overseen by the Board of Governors and led by the Principal and senior management team. The Higher Education Strategy Group has oversight and responsibility for all higher education within the College. This body meets three times each year, is chaired by the Principal and attended by senior members of the College team; the Head Librarian; the Director of Marketing; representatives from partner universities; student representatives and employers. The Higher Education Implementation Group has responsibility for the day-to-day management of higher education provision and is attended by relevant curriculum managers and Heads of School and chaired by the Deputy Principal and feeds back to the Higher Education Strategy Group. The Board of Studies meets on a termly basis to present reports, discuss curriculum issues and offer the opportunity for dialogue between managers, staff and students for quality improvement in teaching, learning, assessment and feedback, as well as course design and structure. The Board of Studies is attended by curriculum managers and Heads of School, partnership managers, student representatives, the quality manager, library and information technology staff and chaired by the Head of Higher Education. The Board reports to the Higher Education Strategy Group and the student forum.

Since the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) by QAA in 2011 the College has undergone a number of changes in terms of senior management, the management of higher education and the type and number of higher education programmes offered. This is manifested in a reduction in the number of higher education programmes offered and a significant reduction in student numbers. In 2014 a new senior management team was put in place and this brought new ideas about the opportunities for higher education at the College. A Head of Higher Education was appointed to lead and coordinate the development of new higher education programmes and dedicated administrative support put in place. Coupled with the removal of student number control in 2013, this has enabled the College to refocus its higher education provision to complement its curriculum map, thus offering progression routes to level 3 students while meeting local and national priorities to develop higher level study and skills, including high quality technical and skills based education to level 5 and beyond. Since 2011 the College has developed strong links with both Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership and South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership which enables the College to offer strategic input into plans for new skills based programmes in the county. In the past five years the College has redeveloped its campuses in Northampton and offers up-to-date resources and facilities for higher education students; in addition a new building at the campus in Daventry will open in autumn 2016.

The College faces a number of key challenges over the next few years. These include National Area Review which is scheduled to begin in Northampton and the south east Midlands in November 2016 and this may impact upon the College's strategic objectives of growing and developing higher education provision. The College also faces increased competition from other colleges and universities regarding the recruitment of higher education students onto programmes and establishing itself as the higher education provider of choice in Northamptonshire. The recruitment and timetabling of staff suitable for teaching on higher education programmes is a challenge within a further education environment. The College's strategic aim to have industry professionals teaching on all higher level programmes also provides further challenges in the recruitment and retention of such staff. This is being addressed through a 'market forces' teaching pay rate and offering existing academic staff the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications.

The College has a relationship with two awarding bodies and one awarding organisation. The partnership with the University of Northampton is long standing and the College delivers five Higher National Diplomas in the areas of photography, digital film production, music production, theatre practice and musical theatre; in addition to one Higher National Certificate in Engineering which is made up of students on Higher Level Apprenticeships with local employers. The partnership with the University of Warwick commenced in 2015 and provision is specific to teacher training, whereby a Certificate and Diploma in Education and Training are delivered on a part-time basis for students who are currently teaching. Two Higher National diplomas in Dance and Technical Theatre are delivered by the College and awarded by Pearson. These commenced in September 2015.

The IQER report was published by QAA in February 2012. The review resulted in five areas of good practice pertaining to assessment practices and methods; vocational development; study skills programmes; teacher training and publicity for programmes. The review also noted nine desirable recommendations in the areas of assessment standardisation; action planning; accuracy of public information; clarity of quality arrangements; clarity of University assessment requirements; embedding the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE); quality and timeliness of feedback; the role of the key deliberative body in promoting and developing assessment practice and development of the linkages between College and University websites. The College has built upon and embedded the areas of good practice and fully addressed all the recommendations.

Explanation of the findings about Northampton 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.

Explanation of the findings about Northampton College

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College is guided by its two awarding bodies and one awarding organisation in ensuring the qualifications it delivers align with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and Subject Benchmark Statements. In the development of courses validated by the University of Northampton the CaIeRO process is used to ensure that courses are developed at the correct level and that module aims are mapped to the overall learning outcomes. Periodic reviews check that the FHEQ and benchmark statements have been fully considered by the teaching team. The University of Warwick programmes are formally moderated every two years to ensure standards of the FHEQ and benchmark statements are being maintained.

1.2 For Pearson programmes the College ensures that units at the appropriate levels are chosen for the delivery of the programme, and academic staff receive training by Pearson on the standards of delivery expected for student achievement.

1.3 The Expectation is met through deliberation by the College in using the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements in the consideration of delivery of the programmes, with ultimate responsibility resting with the two awarding bodies and the awarding organisation.

1.4   To test this Expectation, the review team analysed evidence of the course design and validation process, the programme specifications for each course; and met staff from both the College and the awarding bodies.

1.5   College staff had an appropriate understanding of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements and could articulate how these were used in the delivery of the programmes. The College has a programme specification for each course which outlines the level of the programme on the FHEQ. Some programme specifications also make explicit reference to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement, but many do not. Documentation relating to programme design and review clearly showed how the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements had been considered.

1.6   The review team concluded that the Expectation is met. The associated risk is low because the College operates within the parameters of its awarding bodies and organisation.

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

1.7   The College has agreements with two awarding bodies, the University of Northampton and the University of Warwick, and one awarding organisation, Pearson. The relationship with the awarding bodies is supported by the collaborative handbooks and agreements with the respective universities and Pearson. Assessment is guided by the respective awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's regulations.

1.8   The Head of Higher Education at the College coordinates the development of new higher education programmes within the College and the post holder works with the College quality office to ensure that programmes are compliant with the expectations of the awarding bodies and the organisation.

1.9   The College operates a number of committees to manage its higher education provision. The Higher Education Strategy Group has ultimate responsibility for the College's higher education portfolio and its policies and procedures; while the Higher Education Implementation group supports the day-to-day running of the provision and meets on a monthly basis to discuss matters such as student support, resources and teaching. The College also has a Board of Studies which meets termly and feeds into the Higher Education Strategy Group. The Board of Studies focuses on curriculum matters including assessment strategies and feedback.

1.10   The clear governance structure supported by policies and procedures of the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation would allow the Expectation to be met. There is clear leadership of higher education provision through involvement with higher education committees and the Head of Higher Education.

1.11   The team reviewed a number of evidence sources including documentation relating to awarding body, organisation and College procedures; minutes of meetings of formal College committees with responsibility for the management of higher education; and met staff of the College and the awarding bodies in order to make a judgment on the extent to which the College met this Expectation.

1.12   Staff at the College have a clear understanding of the policies and procedures of the relevant awarding bodies and awarding organisation that guide their programmes, as well as College procedures. Committees were shown to be effective at managing the provision and were agile in decision making. It is clear from the minutes of the various higher education committees how they fit together; with the Higher Education Strategy Group providing higher level management of the provision and the implementation Group and Board of Studies managing day-to-day business. It was also clear from speaking with College staff how these committees feed into the wider College committee structure of Academic Board and policy and planning.

1.13   The review team heard a number of examples where a supportive and beneficial relationship had developed between staff at the College and staff of the University of Northampton. The relationship has been in place for over 18 years and has led to a number of opportunities for the College to grow and enhance its higher education provision.

The review team noted that there is genuine active communication between staff of the College and the University at all levels and College staff are able to access a range of support and guidance from the University through mentoring, programme teams and the C@N-DO staff development programme. As the College grows its Pearson provision, it is using University of Northampton policies and procedures to guide the development of their own processes, such as the development of programme specifications and internal validation of Pearson programmes. The College demonstrated a clear awareness and understanding of how programmes align with its own curriculum offer and also potential progression opportunities for students at the University. The College has also taken on programmes which the University is unable to continue running and is delivering these successfully. The well-embedded and effective relationship between the College and the University of Northampton, which enables a distinctive higher education student experience, is **good practice**. This good practice is also linked to Expectations B3 and B4.

1.14   While the College has been running programmes at level 3 with Pearson for a number of years, it has only recently started to deliver level 4 programmes with the awarding organisation. It is currently in the process of putting in place the necessary procedures in order to manage this provision effectively, drawing on experience in running University of Northampton programmes.

1.15   The College has robust processes for the management of its higher education portfolio, guided by the policies and procedures of its two awarding bodies and one awarding organisation. Therefore the review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16   The College is required to have programme specifications for all of its programmes by its awarding bodies and organisation. These show the level at which the programme is aligned to the FHEQ, the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement and a delivery plan including modules, assessments and learning outcomes.

1.17   Through the University of Northampton CAIeRO process, the awarding body is assured that the assessments meet the overall learning outcomes of the programme and as part of the annual review process programme specifications are checked to ensure accuracy. The College have adapted the CALeRO process for the internal validation of their Pearson programmes, and have used the University of Northampton programme specification template to develop the programme specification for these programmes. Once approved a central record of programme specifications is held with the College's quality office.

1.18   The College has a programme specification for each programme it is running and there is a clear process for their development and approval both internally and with the awarding body and organisation; therefore this would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.19   In order to test the Expectation, the review team saw evidence of the full set of programme specifications for programmes running at the College and documentation relating to their development, approval and monitoring. The review team noted that students had access to the definitive record, and this was confirmed in meetings with staff and students at the College.

1.20   The review team heard and found evidence through documentation and meetings with staff from the College and awarding bodies how programme specifications were designed, approved and monitored. Once programme teams have developed a programme specification in line with the template, the Head of Higher Education confirms the accuracy of the documentation before it is sent off to the appropriate awarding body or organisation for final approval.

1.21   Students are able to access final programme specifications through the VLE or within their programme handbook. Students who met the review team had a clear understanding of the learning outcomes of their programme and where to find them.

1.22   While the majority of programme specifications clearly identified the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statement, two of the programme specifications did not. One of the programme specifications also did not include the overall level learning outcomes in the specification. While a clear explanation was given for this error, the review team **recommends** that the College develop and implement a version control process to maintain the definitive record of programmes to ensure this error is not replicated in future. This recommendation is linked to Expectation C.

1.23   While ultimate responsibility for the approval of the definitive record rests with the awarding bodies and the organisation, the College has developed an internal process for the development and approval of programme specifications. The Expectation is met, however, there is a lack of process by which the College maintains definitive version control of its validated programme specifications, and errors have been shown to occur. The review team assign a moderate risk to this Expectation, for although quality assurance procedures are broadly adequate, there are shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.24   Awarding body procedures support the approval and validation of programmes with the College and include external scrutiny in the process. New programmes comply with national standards and are assessed according to the associated intended learning outcomes. Programmes at the College are either franchises of existing awarding body programmes or validated programmes comprising existing awarding body modules/units.

1.25   College quality assurance documents set out a comprehensive process for approving new directly funded Pearson programmes.

1.26   The College refer to awarding body guidance, particularly the Managing Education with Others Handbook, to ensure they are compliant and supported in the effective planning and delivery of University of Northampton's awards and credit. In respect of franchised provision, the curriculum content is written in partnership with the College who take part in a Collaborative Approval Event that identifies conditions and recommendations that have to be met before approval to deliver programmes is confirmed.

1.27   The University of Warwick ensure their programmes meet UK threshold standards for the qualification in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations and this is laid out in the Memorandum of Agreement for the approval of validated, franchised and other collaborative courses. Unit outcomes are clearly provided and ensure that programmes are assessed according to the associated intended learning outcomes.

1.28   For Pearson programmes, the College have constructed a programmes approval and validation process that assess the makeup of units including an assessment of externality in design and approval.

1.29   The arrangements in place with both awarding bodies and the awarding organisation would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.30   The review team examined a range of documents provided by the College detailing the processes for each awarding body and organisation, including the College's own specifically designed process for the approval and validation application process for directly funded provision. Evidence of involvement of externality, reference to qualification benchmarks and the FHEQ were seen in documents and confirmed in a range of meetings with staff.

1.31   The College has a clear programme application process where a request must be made formally using the programme approval process which is tested by a panel of experts. The Higher Education Implementation Group is the committee with oversight of applications to run new programmes and meets every month to review applications accordingly. Once internal approval has been granted the application progresses to formal approval by the awarding body through the application process that requires the College to submit curriculum vitae for teaching staff, a programme specification which identifies modules/units to be delivered to make up the full qualification and the assessments that make up one full

module/unit. In addition to this process, the College has internal validation panels which ensure programmes adhere to national standards frameworks, are cognisant of external views, target market needs and student demands.

1.32   Effective processes are in place for the approval and validation of programmes which include appropriate consideration by external parties. The review team concludes that processes for designing programmes meet threshold standards, therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.33   Programme handbooks contain intended learning outcomes for programmes which make clear to students what is being assessed. There is one exception to this in that the published version of the Pearson Higher National Diploma in Technical Theatre has this detail omitted; however details of intended learning outcomes per unit are available to students and were discussed in a formal presentation.

1.34   The annual cycle of monitoring and review of all programmes requires programme teams to consider the strengths and weaknesses of modules, units and learning outcomes against national subject benchmarks. Modules and units are mapped to learning outcomes through internal verification of assignment briefs and assessment calendars demonstrate coverage of learning outcomes across programmes. The assessment calendars detail when assessments will take place and how many weeks they will run for. They also include submission and resit dates and are stored for students in handbooks and on the College VLE. On the basis of these arrangements the College would meet the Expectation.

1.35   The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with staff, students and representatives of awarding bodies and through scrutiny of relevant documentation including programme handbooks and external examiner confirmation of achievement.

1.36   External examiners and external reviewers oversee the range of assessments to ensure that assessment is carried out at the appropriate level of the FHEQ. All partner programmes have examination boards that triangulate external examiner feedback and confirm the appropriate level of learning is being met and delivered in a timely manner. The reports confirm academic standards are being met.

1.37   Pearson qualifications will be subject to internal examination boards set up to operate on the same basis as those of the University of Northampton to ensure that consistency and appropriate standards are met to confirm student achievement. The review team **affirms** the action being taken to ensure that preparations for examination boards for Pearson programmes are timely.

1.38   The review team found the College adheres to assessment and award regulations of the awarding bodies and awarding organisation. Assessment is reliable and appropriate and learning outcomes are clearly communicated, with credit awarded on achievement as confirmed by external examiners. The team therefore concludes the systems and processes in place enable the Expectation to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.39   The College delivers higher education programmes in partnership with the University of Northampton, the University of Warwick and Pearson for directly funded programmes. For university validated programmes the College follows processes defined by each university in the annual and periodic review of programmes.

1.40   The College has an established relationship with Pearson through delivery of programmes at level 3 and below. Approval to deliver programmes and any future programme is decided in accordance with the College's Higher Education Strategy. The awarding organisation's policies and procedures are then followed in the approval process, including the makeup of units of study in forming programmes and associated programme specifications. Pearson Assessment Regulations ensure that programmes align with relevant UK standards and provide clear guidance to teaching staff about how learning outcomes should be assessed in a fair and equitable manner. Where university partners have set the assessment, College staff undertake the marking and internal moderation systems outlined by the relevant university.

1.41   The University of Northampton's Quality Assurance Framework document clarifies the University's approach to quality assurance and defines explicit values and expectations. This is supported by an annual review process that sets out to review provision against external benchmarks such as relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ and where appropriate the requirements of any professional, statutory or regulatory bodies. Likewise, a process of periodic review is captured in the Periodic Subject Review Handbook which acts as both a review and a re-approval process for programmes and monitors how incremental changes have been implemented over the period since the last review. All of these processes are encapsulated in the Managing Education with Others Handbook that is shared with academic and support staff.

1.42   The University of Warwick carries out bi-annual, two day moderation reviews of partner colleges to reassure itself that procedures and standards are maintained, primarily for the benefit of students but also as part of its quality processes. Programme structure is reviewed in terms of design, assessment and moderation. Double marking of assessments is undertaken where assessors are inexperienced, through standardisation processes. Only highly experienced classroom practitioners consistently graded as outstanding in the College's Teaching and Learning Observation process are asked to teach on the programme to ensure that the standards are maintained.

1.43   All of these processes and procedures would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.44   The team tested this approach through the scrutiny of a range of documents and through meetings with staff, students and representatives of the awarding bodies.

1.45   The universities monitor adherence to their procedures carefully, both formally, through attendance at the College higher education Board of Study meetings; in rolling action plans; final rolling action plans and quality forums by the Partnership Manager and

senior managers from the university. Informal monitoring takes place through regular meetings between the Partnership Manager and the Head of Higher Education, where changes to procedures or concerns about College compliance with procedures can be raised if necessary.

1.46   Changes to validated programmes follow formal university procedures and are taken through the Programme Approval Committee.

1.47   The team concludes that the College adheres to the requirements of monitoring and review and fulfils its delegated responsibilities. It is proactive in gathering information that informs action plans and there is clear strategic College level oversight. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.48   The awards delivered by the College are validated by the University of Northampton, the University of Warwick and Pearson and the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation are responsible for appointing external examiners under the College's partnership and Centre agreements respectively.

1.49   In meetings with employers, staff and students it is clear that the College actively consults employers in line with signed partnership agreements in the development of curriculum and combination of units for delivery on Pearson programmes.

1.50   The College is offered the opportunity by its awarding bodies to contribute to the appointment of external examiners if it chooses to do so and this includes access to the curriculum vitae of potential candidates. Pearson notifies the College of external examiners at appropriate times throughout the year; however, the external examiner has just been confirmed in post for the Higher National DiplomaTechnical Theatre programme. External examiners who have remit for both Higher Nationals at the College and degrees in the same subject area at the University of Northampton standardise across both qualifications to ensure that there is equity between programmes. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.51   The team met students, senior and academic staff and employers and examined arange of documents, such as external examiner reports, a range of action plans and also reviewed employer contracts and service level agreements in the assessment of this Expectation.

1.52   The external perspective and student involvement is critical in the approval and validation process. Programme teams engage a student representative and an external panel member from the relevant industry to attend validation meetings. Panel members represent stakeholders and act as equal partners to academics on the panel, but with the express remit to consider the effectiveness of the programme design and structure from the point of view of the student experience and employment/employability.

1.53   Final approval for external examiners goes through the Northampton University's Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) and programme teams are included in the process of recruiting and inducting a new external examiner before approval is finalised. The University of Warwick appoint examiners through the Centre for Lifelong Learning and the College are advised accordingly. In addition, Pearson appoint external examiners and advise the College of the details of the appointee who in turn contact the College's quality nominee to make visit arrangements.

1.54   The review team heard and found evidence of external expertise being used in programme validation, periodic subject reviews and changes to existing programmes.

1.55   The external examiner's reports are considered as part of the annual review process during the writing of the final rolling action plan and rolling action plan where actions are reflected upon in programme team evaluations.

1.56   Feedback from examiner reports over the past two years have been extremely positive and demonstrate strong confidence in programmes delivered by the College.

1.57   The review team concludes that the College, working with the awarding bodies, awarding organisation and employers, use external and independent expertise in the setting and maintenance of academic standards and this therefore meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.58   In determining its judgement on the maintenance of academic standards of awards at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low, except for Expectation A2.2 which is assigned a moderate risk. There is one area of good practice identified in Expectation A2.1. The team also identifies one recommendation in Expectation A2.2 and an affirmation in Expectation A3.2.

1.59   The approach to maintaining academic standards at the College is defined by the awarding bodies and by the requirements of the awarding organisation. The College uses the established academic frameworks, regulations and procedures of the awarding bodies and has drawn on these to model the College approach to maintaining academic standards for Higher National provision with Pearson. Staff are familiar with the responsibilities that are assigned to the College with regards to academic standards and there is external engagement and oversight of standards through the awarding body and through the use of external examiners.

1.60   Overall, the review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards 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 overall strategic responsibility for the development of new programmes lies with the College's Higher Education Strategy Group, which approves the timescales and planned implementation dates for proposed additions to the portfolio of programmes in operation. This group is chaired by the Principal and covers matters such as the curriculum offer, curriculum development, growth opportunities, partnerships and oversight of the quality of provision. The College also review curriculum development based on local strategic priorities as outlined by the two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and have influenced the skills agenda for these partnerships where gaps are evident.

2.2 The College outlines 12 strategic objectives in the Higher Education Strategy document which sets out how it will respond to internal and external factors on an annual basis and how it will continue to develop a robust higher education offer to maximise opportunities for all higher education learners. The arrangements and processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The team explored the extent to which this approach met the Expectation through consideration of a range of documentation and meetings with relevant stakeholders,including staff, students, representatives from the awarding bodies and employers.

2.4 The College use the awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's policies and procedures in the approval and revalidation process including the design of the programme and makeup of modules/units of study which then inform the writing of the formal associated programme specifications.

2.5 The College has designed a robust process of internal validation. It convenes an Internal Validation Panel consisting of the Assistant Principal for Teaching Learning and Quality, the Head of Higher Education and the Manager for Quality Assurance with other panel members drawn as required from industry or other academic institutions. The Panel considers the programme specification, module/unit structure, schemes of work, assignment calendars and other aspects including work experience, planned assessments, teaching staff and how they will be deployed, and opportunities for enhancing the student experience. New Pearson programmes are not permitted to start until they have been approved by the Panel.

2.6 Validation of programmes, once agreed in principle by the Higher Education Strategy Group, then progress to the formal mechanisms of approval by the associated awarding body or organisation.

2.7 Minor changes to programmes are considered during the annual cycle of monitoring and review of programmes where programme teams consider the necessity for amendments to modules, units and/or learning outcomes. These are considered against national subject benchmarks, agreed by the awarding bodies and formally reviewed at the time of revalidation.

2.8   The review team concludes that the College, through its awarding bodies and awarding organisation, ensures that 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. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.9   The College's Higher Education Strategy identifies the need for a curriculum map which allows students to progress easily from level three qualifications at the College to higher education. This enables the College to provide higher education opportunities for those who would otherwise not access higher education and the new curriculum structure allows seamless progression for current students onto higher education programmes. The College also actively recruits externally and gives talks at local schools and at University of Northampton open days.

2.10   Students wishing to apply to courses validated by the University of Northampton can do so through UCAS and are dealt with initially by the University. There is a separate internal admissions process for University of Warwick and Pearson validated programmes. Entry criteria for courses is reviewed as part of the quality assurance process and are available through programme specifications and on the College website.

2.11   For many of the College's programmes, prospective students are interviewed to ensure they have the necessary skills and that the programme meets their needs. Students also have an opportunity to gain credit for prior experiences and the College has relevant policies in place for the recognition of prior learning for the different awarding bodies.

2.12   The College has an appeals process in place for students who are unsuccessful in their application and this is available online through the College website.

2.13   Students with disabilities are able to declare this in their application to the College. At present the University of Northampton provides the necessary support to students who need additional help to complete their studies. However, the College supports one student who has transitioned from a level 3 programme to provide continuity of experience for that student.

2.14   The College has a number of processes in place with its awarding bodies and the awarding organisation which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.15   The review team tested the Expectation through evaluating the policies and procedures of the College, awarding bodies and awarding organisation; reviewing the College website and programme specifications and met staff and students from the College.

2.16   Staff whom the review team met were confident in articulating how each of the different approaches to recruitment of students was made operational. The review team heard that staff regularly share practice with regards to how the interview process operated. Interviews are conducted by two members of staff and a record is kept of the discussion. Staff were able to use the good relationship with the University of Northampton by attending the latter's open days to support recruitment activities and information was shared between the two institutions.

2.17   The enrolment criteria and the interview process is monitored as part of the College's annual monitoring processes and programme specifications detail the admission processes for each programme.

2.18   Students who met the review team spoke of a positive experience through the application process and were clear on what was expected of them and what they needed to do in order to become enrolled on the programme. Some of the students had transitioned from a level 3 course and were happy with the advice and guidance given to them. Students who were new to the institution said they had received appropriate information about the programme during the application process.

2.19   As there is Pearson provision in place for the first time in the current academic year, the College is now liable to provide support to students with disabilities on Pearson approved programmes. The admissions and student support team are therefore currently working on developing College policies for supporting these higher education students where necessary.

2.20   The College clearly operationalises the various policies and procedures which govern its admissions processes with the varying awarding bodies and awarding organisation. There is clear guidance given to applicants both online and face to face and the College's criteria and processes for recruitment, selection and admission are regularly monitored. The review team therefore finds this Expectation to be met with a low level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.21   A strategic aim of the College is to develop its staff in their professional teaching practice. The annual Staff Development Plan and Scholarly Activity Policy supports this aim, as well as various initiatives to allow staff to be reflective of their practice and gain training and support for their teaching. The relationship with the University of Northampton provides academic staff with additional opportunities to access training, advice and guidance; and staff from the College are able to attend a Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredited staff development programme (C@N-DO) in order to equip them with the skills to teach at higher education level. The College has a commitment to recruiting teachers who have relevant industry experience in order to enhance the student experience and have introduced a new teaching pay rate to make teaching more attractive to local professionals.

2.22   As part of the academic staff development programme, the Higher Education Scholarship Strategy has been written to empower College staff to undertake research and practice which will have a positive impact on their teaching practice. Applications for this are considered by a panel made up of the Deputy Principal, the Assistant Principal of Teaching Learning and Quality and the Head of Higher Education and are monitored by the Scholarly Activity and Professional Development Group.

2.23   Teaching staff are formally observed by the Head of Higher Education annually and the new College process ensures that this observation is undertaken in a higher education setting for those who teach on higher education programmes. Staff who teach on University of Warwick programmes also have a peer review undertaken of their practice by a staff member of the University every two years. The College also has Advanced Practitioners who support staff in developing their teaching practice though peer review, guidance and support.

2.24   The College operates its own VLE and students enrolled on programmes validated by the awarding bodies are also able to access the VLE provided by the University of Northampton and University of Warwick respectively. The University of Northampton CAIeRO process enables programme teams to be reflective about different modes of delivery and many embrace new technology in the delivery of the programme. Students are inducted into their relevant VLE platforms during the induction process and the College monitors student use of the VLEs. The University of Northampton also provides VLE training for staff who teach on their programmes.

2.25   The College has a strategic aim of enhancing the higher education student experience through work placements and industry experience. Some students receive teaching in the workplace or as part of skills workshops with local businesses. Industry professionals are able to impart their knowledge to students through these initiatives, and students gain useful knowledge and skills for their future employment. From September 2016 all students will be encouraged to undertake a work placement and the College is currently producing a Work Experience Handbook to facilitate this.

2.26   The College has a number of strategies which support the development of effective teaching practice at the level expected of higher education provision. Working with the

University of Northampton the College is able to provide training and support for its teaching and professional staff and monitors the learning environment though annual monitoring and various College committees. These arrangements would allow for the Expectation to be met.

2.27   The review team received evidence from the College in relation to its strategies for effective teaching, the way in which it monitors the effectiveness of the learning environment and how it aims to develop this in the future. The review team triangulated this evidence though meetings with staff, students and local employers.

2.28   The College has made a strategic decision to require higher education programmes to have at least one industry practitioner teaching on each programme on the basis that this brings a richness to the student experience by providing students with the context of how their learning can be applied in the work environment. The College recognises that many of these professionals will have little or no teaching experience or qualifications in teaching and has therefore put together a support package which includes mentoring, support from an Advanced Practitioner and the opportunity to undertake formal teaching qualifications. Opportunities for scholarly activity are well supported by the College and the review team met a number of academic staff who received time out of teaching or financial support in order to do this effectively. The Scholarly Activity and Professional Development Group, which is a subgroup of the Higher Education Strategy Group, supports this work and monitors its effectiveness. Staff from the University of Northampton also provide support to academic staff which further enables the College to provide good quality higher education teaching to its students. In addition, College staff were complimentary of how the College and University of Northampton worked together to share practice and made good use of the training and support available to them from the University. This has contributed to the feature of good practice identified in Expectation A2.1 of this report.

2.29   Students whom the review team met were very happy with the quality of teaching provided to them by both full-time College staff and part-time industry professionals. They particularly appreciated the mix between academic study and professional skills training which enabled them to feel prepared for their future career. College National Student Survey results also show that students are very positive about the quality of teaching provided to them. Students are able to comment on the quality of teaching and the VLE through Student Forum meetings and Board of Studies meetings. This information feeds into College annual monitoring processes.

2.30   Staff were able to articulate well how their practice changes between higher and further education teaching and they had a good understanding of the expectations placed upon them by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements.

2.31   The College have developed an awards system for the use of the College VLE which awards bronze, silver and gold levels to staff who use the VLE effectively. However, due to staff changes this academic year, the review team were unable to see how this monitoring worked in practice.

2.32   The senior management team of the College have shown a clear commitment to providing a good quality and higher education specific learning experience for their students. This is operationalised through College strategies, committees and processes and is well supported by both the College, the University of Northampton and University of Warwick. The review team therefore concludes that this 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

2.33   The College has a firm commitment to raising the aspirations of the community it serves. The curriculum offer has been designed to ensure that higher education is available to students from all backgrounds, and academic strengths in further education have been utilised to provide students with opportunities to progress onto higher education programmes.

2.34   Once students have enrolled on their programme they receive an induction by the College and the respective awarding bodies. The library provides students with an in-depth study skills course in order to prepare students for learning at a higher level. This includes sessions on referencing, researching and good academic practice skills. Students registered on University of Northampton programmes also attend the University and can take part in additional 'Welcome Week' activities. The College also brings all of the higher education cohort together for a combined induction activity which gives students the opportunity to get to know one another in a structured supportive manner.

2.35   As well as having digital access to the awarding bodies learning resources, and in the case of University of Northampton students access to physical resources, the College also provides library resources for their higher education students. In 2015 the Higher Education Strategy Group took the decision to create a higher education study room which provides computer access and quiet space away from further education students in the College.

2.36   Students have a weekly tutorial timetabled with their tutor that can either be group or individual tutorials. These allow discussions to take place specifically about assessment and individual performance. Students on University of Northampton programmes can also use the Centre for Achievement and Performance at the University to support their learning.

2.37   Students who declare a disability and are enrolled on University of Northampton programmes receive support through the University of Northampton ASSIST scheme. Since the beginning of the current academic year the College has its own responsibilities through its Pearson provision for supporting students with academic or physical needs. It is therefore developing staff skills in supporting students at higher education level and working with the University of Northampton student support team to do this. The College has in the past facilitated student support for students who have progressed through their further education courses onto higher education programmes.

2.38   Supporting students to progress onto employment is a key aim for the College. The careers advice service at the College run a job finding service for students and academic teams provide an environment whereby students can learn about both the academic and professional nature of their subject. Assessments are linked to 'live briefs' or realistic work scenarios and the professional staff that teach on the programme provide additional guidance to students on future employment options.

2.39   The College offers students academic, pastoral and employability support throughout their studies which is enhanced by the University of Northampton's support for both students and staff at the college. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.40   In order to test the Expectation, the review team analysed evidence provided by the College including information about the services it offers to students and how it evaluates them. The team viewed the online and physical support tools which underpin these services and spoke with staff and students of the College.

2.41   The College provides a coherent and in-depth induction into higher education study. Students who the review team met were complementary of the level of support they received from the commencement of their studies and beyond and felt confident in their transition to higher level learning. The availability of study skills support in paper, online and in physical tutorials is inclusive and provides students with ample opportunities to engage in developing their academic skills.

2.42   Bringing together each higher education cohort at the beginning of their studies enables students to feel part of a higher education community within the College and other initiatives such as different lanyards, different classroom rules and a different dress code make students feel they belong. Students' positivity about the support available to them can also be seen in the National Student Survey results for the College in this area.

2.43   As well as students being able to feedback on College services through the Student Forum and Higher Education Implementation Group, their voice is also fed into the self-assessment reports of individual services.

2.44   In meetings with staff of the College it was clear that they have very good working relationships with their counterparts in the University of Northampton and that this was supporting the enhancement of their services to higher education students. As well as day-to-day support for staff, students were able to easily access University services and were actively engaged in University run activities. The review team were provided with many examples of this type of activity; for instance students were invited to the 'Subject Futures' week at the University which provided students with workshops, talks and screenings on various employment opportunities within the creative industries. This has contributed to the feature of good practice highlighted in Expectation A2.1.

2.45   The College, supported by its awarding bodies, provides comprehensive support to its higher education students which is distinctive to that provided to other College students and demonstrates a clear commitment to student achievement and progression.
The services are reviewed annually and students are able to provide clear feedback on their services. Therefore, the review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.46   Students engage successfully at operational level with the College to ensure and enhance provision and the process is outlined in the College Higher Education Quality Review Policy. Methods for interaction include termly Student Forum meetings which feed into Board of Studies meetings, bi-annual focus group meetings chaired by the Head of Higher Education, annual National Student Survey review for second year students and student representation at the Higher Education Strategy Group. Feedback to the student body takes place through the higher education 'Tell us how we're doing' stakeholder feedback process.

2.47   Student representatives are elected in the third week of the programme on an annual basis. Representatives are the conduit through which the Head of Higher Education reaches the full student body.

2.48   Student representatives attend formal meetings as identified above. The Board of Studies meetings are chaired by the Head of Higher Education which is a key meeting where curriculum quality issues are discussed including student feedback from their own meetings. There are no higher education students elected onto the governing body of the College to enable their voice to be heard in person at the highest levels of the Corporation. However, two student representatives attend the Higher Education Strategy Group meeting once a term on a rotational basis and this offers the opportunity for students to be involved in decision making and quality assurance at senior management level. It was originally planned for one student to attend this but students found it intimidating and they suggested it would be easier if two students attended. This suggestion was agreed by the Higher Education Implementation Group which is the operational arm of the College's higher education provision. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.49   The review team considered the documentation provided by the College, by student representatives, in discussion with students from a range of programmes and in meetings with academic and professional staff. The team also considered the student submission, which was broadly positive.

2.50   Training for student representatives on University of Northampton programmes is provided directly and supported by materials on the University's VLE. The President of the Students' Union from the University of Northampton visits students during the year to carry out basic training and then to maintain contact with the student body to ensure they feel part of the partner institution as well as the College. In response to student survey feedback and informal meetings between students and the Head of Higher Education it was felt this approach has not been effective and the College has now established a Higher Education Student Liaison Officer with the remit to liaise between the College and partner institutions in order to develop communication between College students and student union representatives. This has resulted in the President and other officials coming to the College to meet with student representatives and discuss student views.

2.51   While students on University of Northampton programmes receive formal training to carry out their student representative roles, University of Warwick students do not elect a student representative for their programme. This approach is supported by both the programme team and students who felt that the nature of the part-time delivery negates its

need. College students on Pearson programmes have access to the Head of Higher Education and the Higher Education Student Liaison Officer for support. The review team therefore **recommends** the College ensure all programmes have formal student representation and provide training to enable students to be effective advocates.

2.52   Feedback from students including summative survey data and outcomes of focus groups feed into formal programme annual self-assessment processes. Twice each year all students complete anonymised feedback on their programmes of study through module evaluation forms. The Head of Higher Education also visits all cohort groups twice a year during timetabled sessions to enable students to talk about the organisation, the delivery of their programmes and to hear student views about teaching, learning, assessment, feedback and resources. This is supported by an open-door policy at programme level where students feel that good accessibility to lecturers resolves matters that arise in a timely fashion.

2.53   The College recognises that they need to further mature their approach to student engagement, and in particular to fully involve part-time students on two-year programmes. A more strategic approach to engagement with students is also considered a priority, with wider representation on a broader range of College committees and in quality and enhancement processes. The team **recommends** the College ensure that students can engage more widely as partners in the development of their educational experience.

2.54   Although current processes sufficiently engage students to ensure their voice is heard operationally it is clear that opportunities to engage students more fully as partners in their learning experience need to be developed. The team identified the need for more formal structured appointment of student representatives across all programmes, supported by a comprehensive training programme to discharge their duties effectively. Strategically, wider exposure to College and programme quality assurance and enhancement forums will benefit the College and students as partners in their learning experience. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate due to the problems identified being confined to a small part of the provision.

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

2.55   The College's Higher Education Assessment Policy is a useful document in supporting student development and the maintenance of academic standards. It consists of two definitive aspects: assessment activities and performance and staff judgements on student achievement of learning outcomes. It aligns its content to the Quality Code, in particular Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality and *Chapter 6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning.*

2.56   The University of Northampton and University of Warwick provide all assessment information to programme leaders in a timely manner with clear guidance regarding deadlines, structures and content, alongside standardised marking schemes. Pearson accredited programmes offer clear guidance and support for staff involved in assessment and providing feedback. Pearson staff deliver training to support this. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.57   The team reviewed and tested this Expectation by triangulating the College's Higher Education Assessment Policy to that of practice. Programme and module handbooks, specifications, assignment briefs and the College systems for marking, moderation and assessment were scrutinised. Processes for accreditation of prior and experiential learning were clearly articulated by staff in meetings and closely aligned with awarding bodies and organisation procedures.

2.58   The College provides programme handbooks for students that detail the intended learning outcomes of their programmes and assessment methodologies, with the exception of the Higher National Diploma in Technical Theatre where this information is missing. These are further detailed in the associated programme specifications and are available to students in hard copy and on the College and partner university VLEs. Programme handbooks include a range of information covering assessment strategies and how they differ between levels, programme and module/unit specifications, assessment calendars, module guides and reading lists. Students identified that they find assessment practice and the clear assessment calendars support their timely submission of work.

2.59   Student progress is monitored in a series of examination boards that ensure assessment is carried out at the appropriate level of the FHEQ. University examination boards are managed by the awarding bodies. In respect of Pearson qualifications the College plan to mirror this process with internal examination boards run under the same conditions as those of partner universities to ensure that consistency and appropriate standards are met. External examiners comment on the appropriateness of assessment, as well as comparability of standards in their annual reports.

2.60   The College uses plagiarism-detection software to support students and staff in ensuring the originality of submitted work.

2.61   The College operate a robust and comprehensive internal verification process of assignment briefs that ensures learning projects are linked to units/modules of study and meet intended learning outcomes. Likewise the same principles are applied to second marking and moderation. Staff are expected to feedback to students within three weeks of submitting work rather than the four week timescale partner universities require. Students commented favourably about turnaround times, stating that marking and feedback is consistently returned within two weeks and that the quality of feedback supports the grade awarded and their personal development.

2.62   The College has a clear process for the recognition and accreditation of prior learning for partner university programmes and processes map prior learning to a programme's learning outcomes. Where a student is being assessed for entry with accreditation of prior learning, varied assessment formats are used to determine the student's suitability for the level of study. This can include a formal piece of academic writing or a practical activity and may comprise of a verbal question and answer assessment. For Pearson programmes the College use the awarding organisation's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Process in determining and processing claims.

2.63   Staff members involved in assessing on University of Northampton programmes have received continued professional development training through the University's C@N-DO programme which is specifically designed to enhance performance and confidence in assessing at levels 4 and 5. Staff involved in the programme confirmed that it was a particularly useful medium for the sharing of good practice and allowed them to gain confidence in effectively assessing at level 4 and above.

2.64   The College offers fair, valid and consistent processes for assessment. Feedback enables all students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved their intended learning outcomes and what they need to do to improve. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.65   As the College does not have degree awarding powers, external examiners are appointed to each higher education programme by either the partner university or Pearson in line with their relevant agreements.

2.66   External examiners for the University of Warwick are nominated by the University's Centre for Lifelong Learning and the College advised accordingly. External examiners do not always have to be a specialist in the particular modules/units or programmes offered but should be sufficiently experienced to cover the broad range of work being assessed. They are also encouraged to meet students on the programme individually or collectively to allow them to comment in confidence on the quality of their learning experience.

2.67   It is the responsibility of each School at the University of Northampton to ensure that it has appropriate external examiners in place at the start of a new programme and this will often be discussed during the validation process in negotiation with the College who view curriculum vitae before appointments are made.

2.68   Pearson appoint external examiners for its programmes and at the time of the review visit an examiner had been identified recently for the new Higher Nationa Diplomal Technical Theatre programme. The College have however received training from the awarding organisation on the process of external examination. All of these processes and procedures enable the Expectation to be met.

2.69   The team examined external examiner reports and met staff and students. The team noted that external examiner reports are broadly positive and confirm that academic standards on all programmes are being met. In meetings with students the team heard how they have access to external examiner reports, which are also presented on the relevant pages of College and university VLEs.

2.70   External examiners employed by the University of Northampton see samples of student assessed work during their visits and make comments in their annual report, evaluating assessments against standard benchmarks. The reports are then considered as part of the annual review process during the writing of the final rolling action plan and ongoing associated rolling action plans. External examiner reports are sent to the University and logged in its quality assurance office before a copy is sent to the Quality Manager at Northampton College who sends it through to the relevant curriculum manager and programme leader, as well as the Head of Higher Education. External examiner reports feed into the College higher education committee processes and are received by Higher Education Strategy Group for noting and discussion.

2.71   Students are made aware of the role of external examiners during their induction and are invited to attend meetings during their visits. External examiners in their reports make reference to the positive engagement of students during visits to the College.

2.72   The processes and procedures in place allow the College to fulfil awarding body requirements relating to external examiners. The team confirms that the College make scrupulous use of external examiner reports and relevant College committees have oversight of emerging themes. The review team therefore considers the Expectation met and the associated level of risk 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

2.73   The College has a range of formal committees that meet at monthly and termly intervals and they have responsibility for the oversight of higher education programmes. In addition, all programmes are monitored routinely and periodically reviewed in terms of planning and performance.

2.74   The Higher Education Strategy Group monitors adherence to the annual review process and makes judgments on issues or emerging themes that arise from the process. These judgements are then incorporated into action plans. Programme teams working in partnership with the University of Northampton work on rolling action plans which are monitored and updated at monthly programme team and programme leader meetings. In addition the University holds School Quality Forums to ensure the consistency of good practice across the whole School and enable the wider dissemination of good practice. The minutes of the Quality Forum are received by the Higher Education Strategy Group at which point key issues are discussed.

2.75   The Annual Review process for the University of Northampton is written up as a policy paper which forms part of staff induction and continued professional development training. The University of Warwick process for the monitoring and review of programmes is outlined in the Measures of Quality Assurance document. The document outlines the key internal (based at the College) and external (based at the University) review of provision and is colour coded for the College's benefit to determine their points of their involvement in the process.

2.76   Unit feedback undertaken by students is built into the annual process of module and unit review and support decisions for minor changes and amendments.

2.77   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.78   The team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of relevant documentation and in meetings with students, staff and employers.

2.79   In 2014-15 the University of Northampton replaced the role of Link Tutors with Partnership Managers who have the responsibility for overseeing monitoring of all partnership provision. The College has established a strong relationship with its Partnership Manager and the Head of Higher Education meets with the Partnership Manager informally on a regular basis to discuss issues. The Partnership Manager is a member of the Board of Studies and the Higher Education Strategy Group and compiles an annual report evaluating the provision at the College and quality of delivery. The Higher Education Strategy Group meets termly to receive meeting minutes from all other monitoring groups. The Group includes representatives from different stakeholders, including student representatives, awarding body representatives and employers, as well as members of the senior management team including the Principal and Deputy Principal. The wider evaluation of provision delivered in partnership with the University takes place every five years through the Periodic Subject Review process. An internal School meeting is held at the University to check through the documentation in preparation for this review process.

2.80   The University of Warwick quality assurance and review process is realised in four whole day review development visits at the College throughout the academic year. Each visit has a specific focus; for example, the review of committee meeting minutes, student experience and external examination outcomes.

2.81   Pearson programmes are monitored annually as part of the quality monitoring process during which time checks are made to ensure that regulations are being adhered to. With the introduction of new Pearson qualifications, the annual monitoring process is to be collated into one overall Higher Education Self-Assessment Report, written by the Head of Higher Education. This will include the information from the final rolling action plans of all programmes to enable the College to create one overall quality evaluation and monitoring document for all higher education programmes. This will enable the Higher Education Strategy Group to consider higher education provision in one format and the minutes, which will include learner voice and feedback from employers, will inform its content.

2.82   Student involvement in programme monitoring and review takes place through representation at the Board of Studies, Higher Education Strategy Group meetings and through Student Voice activities including focus groups, module/unit feedback and the National Student Survey.

2.83   The review team concludes that the College, through its awarding bodies and the awarding organisation, ensure that 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. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.84   Students on validated and franchised courses are considered to be first and foremost students of the awarding body and therefore the policies and processes of each University is the defined route for dealing with complaints that need escalation. However, it is normal practice, given that College staff have a better knowledge of the student and the specific situation, for a collaborative approach to be taken to resolve any issues informally in the first instance. The College has a Higher Education Compliments and Complaints Policy which sets out the process and circumstances in which a complaint can be made and dealt with and the Higher Education Liaison Officer supports students impartially throughout the process.

2.85   The processes and support outlined above would allow the design of the Expectation to be met. To date, no formal appeals have been registered and only two complaints have been received, with both being resolved at the informal stage of the process. If a complaint or appeal was to progress beyond the informal stage, staff and students are well informed and understand the process which is published on the College and awarding body VLEs.

2.86   The team tested the Expectation by examining the College and awarding bodies' complaints and appeals policies and procedures and by testing understanding and adherence to those policies in discussion with staff and students in formal meetings.

2.87   The College policy is specific to students on directly funded Pearson programmes managed by the College; while University of Northampton and University of Warwick students are referred to directly to their own policy, procedures and processes. To complement this the College has its own Higher Education Academic Appeals Procedure which details the process for appealing an assessment decision. Both policies make explicit referral to the final option of involving the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.88   The process of complaint and appeal for the University of Northampton is detailed in a comprehensive Academic and Student Regulations 2015-16 document and on their website. These make students aware of the process for making their concerns known without fear of reprisal and identifies arrangements for handling complaints, in line with the Quality Code, *Chapter B9*. Further details can also be found in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which includes names and contact details for key personnel involved in the process.

2.89   Students studying on University of Warwick programmes are directed to the Code of Practice on Assessment for Initial Teacher Training Courses (Lifelong Learning Sector) for appeals against assessment decisions. This directs students in the first instance to consult the module tutor; however, the student may raise concerns with the Director of Academic Studies. Only if this action then proves unsatisfactory are they advised to go to a higher authority.

2.90   All complaint letters and emails are logged by the quality team within the Quality Office and progress is recorded to ensure that an outcome is reached with the aim that the student can continue their studies with support. Complaints and their outcomes are reported to the Higher Education Implementation Group. A summary of complaints is reported annually to the Higher Education Strategic Group.

2.91   On the basis of the evidence provided, the team concludes that the College operates effective, systematic and supportive processes for receiving and dealing with complaints and appeals. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated 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

2.92   The College has a well defined and long standing relationship with its local university, and has more recently developed a further two relationships with the University of Warwick and with Pearson. These relationships have enabled the College to diversify the higher education opportunities it offers to its students which align to the curriculum offerred in other areas of the College. While there are no formal articulation agreements with the University of Northampton, many of the College's courses are designed to align to University awards in order to aid student progression.

2.93   The College has a number of agreements with local businesses to enhance student learning opportunities in work environments and the College has committed to providing industry experience for all of its higher education students from September 2016.

2.94   Students on the Higher National Certificate Engineering programme attend the College as part of a day release scheme. Their progress is monitored through monthly workplace assessments and the College articulates to the employer what is expected of the student. The tutor and placement provider both complete a Work Placement Agreement to support this activity. Students studying on the University of Warwick teacher training qualification are also primarily employed and are able to use their work environment to gain the necessary experience for their assignments. All assessments are set and marked by the College which ensures academic standards and national benchmarks are considered appropriately.

2.95   The College has appropriate processes and procedures in place to manage the student experience in the workplace which are necessary for them to complete their studies. They are monitored in the work environment, where appropriate, by College staff and employers are provided with an understanding of the academic requirements of the course. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.96   In order to test the Expectation, the review team evaluated evidence pertaining to student work placements and how they are developed, agreed and monitored and met staff, students and local employers.

2.97   The review team heard examples from employers of how they are involved with providing opportunities for students to undertake their studies. This ranged from those who employ Higher Level Apprenticeships on the Higher National Certificate Engineering programme, to the local theatre who provide work placements and workshops for students to enhance their learning experience. Employers had a good understanding of what was expected, both of the student and themselves in supporting student attainment, and agreements were in place with each of the organisations. Programme leaders are responsible for developing and nurturing relationships with local employers and discussions take place at the Higher Education Strategy Group to develop this area of work. The College is in the process of designing a Work Placement Handbook for employers who support student learning in this way, and this will assist in coordinating the way in which the College engages with its local partners. Local employers are also able to feed into discussions about

new programmes and advise the College on appropriate modules for students who wish to gain employment in their specific industry.

2.98   This is an area where the College is developing its practice, by formalising what programme leaders in different areas of the College are doing to ensure an equitable experience for both students and employers. The College undertakes appropriate checks on providers before students undertake work experience which links to their learning, while quality and standards are maintained through workplace assessments and management of assessment processes. Therefore the review team concludes this Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.99   The College has no research degree provision, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.100   In determining its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low in all Expectations, apart from Expectation B5, where the review team considers there to be a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities. The review team identifies two recommendations for action pertaining to Expectation B5. There are no affirmations or areas of good practice in this area.

2.101   The College has a range of opportunities for students to provide feedback which encompass formal surveys, focus groups and informal feedback. Student representatives are elected by their peers and act as a channel of communication between students and the College. Student representatives also attend formal meetings at various levels and this offers the opportunity for students to be involved in decision making and quality assurance at senior management level; however, there are no higher education students elected onto the governing body of the College to enable their voice to be heard in person at the highest levels of the Corporation. The review team notes that University of Warwick and Pearson students do not elect a student representative for their programmes as they feel that the nature of the part-time delivery negates its need. The review team therefore recommends the College ensure that all programmes have formal student representation and provide training to enable students to be effective advocates. Although current processes sufficiently engage students to ensure their voice is heard operationally it is clear that opportunities to engage students more fully as partners in their learning experience need to be developed. The team also recommends that the College ensures that students can engage more widely as partners in the development of their educational experience.

2.102   After consideration of the criteria for judgements set out in Annex 2 of the published handbook, the review team concludes that overall 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 Director of Marketing at the College has overall responsibility for public information provided by the College Descriptors for programmes are audited and updated annually and it is the responsibility of the curriculum managers to ensure that programme information on the College website is accurate. Printed materials such as the prospectus are approved by the Head of Higher Education and an appropriate contact with the awarding bodies. There is a direct link from the College's webpage to the University of Northampton, so prospective students are able to find out more information about the programme and facilities available. In future, changes to programmes will be reported on at the Higher Education Strategy Group to ensure that public information is updated accordingly.

3.2 All programme specifications and course descriptors are kept and maintained centrally and are updated as required. Programme pages contain information about the structure of the programme, the programme specification, admissions criteria and application process. The website also provides career information to students, showing possible employment paths after successful completion of their programme.

3.3 A review of public information takes place annually and students are able to feed in their views about the accuracy and usefulness of information at Student Forum meetings. Information is also monitored at the College Higher Education Implementation group.

3.4 Once students have enrolled they receive a programme, College and relevant university handbook. These provide information on the delivery of the programme, support services in place and regulations which govern their programme. There are minimum criteria for the content of module guides but no formal template. Programme teams are responsible for updating handbook information if adjustments are made to programmes through the annual monitoring processes. Programme specifications are also audited by the University of Northampton annually.

3.5 Students on university accredited courses have access to two VLEs; that of the College and of the awarding body. Staff are trained to use both systems and primarily use the relevant university VLE for teaching. The sites contain information such as handbooks, learning materials and external examiner reports. The College audits the College VLE as does the University of Northampton.

3.6 The College has in place processes with which to ensure accuracy, transparency and helpful information to current and prospective students. It is managed through programme teams and the Director for Marketing and Head of Higher Education have designated responsibility for information, backed up by the awarding bodies. In addition, information is driven by the higher education committees of the College. These arrangements would allow for the Expectation to be met.

3.7 The review team accessed published materials of the College for both prospective and current students, saw evidence of how information is monitored and developed, met staff from the College and awarding university, and met students.

3.8   The College provides an easily navigable website for prospective students and the general public to access information about their programmes and governance arrangements. Information pertaining to the application process is easily accessible and clear information is provided on the content of programmes in order for students to make an informed choice.

3.9   The College provides comprehensive information to current students though programme and module handbooks, which enables students to have a good understanding of what is expected of them. The VLEs provide a central hub of information and students have a good understanding of where they can find information relating to their programme including assessment briefs and external examiner reports. While the College has an awards system in place for the use of the VLE, at the time of the review visit no audits of higher education programmes had been undertaken.

3.10   Students on university programmes have access to relevant student handbooks and regulations and the College is currently developing its own College handbook based on the format of the University of Northampton handbooks.

3.11   The marketing team has developed a schedule for published information to which allows a formal system of checks on information.

3.12   Students are happy with the information provided on the website and through handbooks and those whom the review team met thought it was an accurate reflection of their programme.

3.13   The review team found an error in the programme specification of one programme which was replicated in the student handbook. This error meant that students did not have access to the overall learning outcomes for the programme. Although the relevant checks were used to approve the complete programme specification for publication, the error occurred because of a lack of process in maintaining version control. Staff whom the review team met had little understanding of the importance of maintaining central records of programme specifications and student handbooks, and were able to edit documents on the College's shared drive freely. This has contributed, and is linked, to the recommendation made in Expectation A2.2.

3.14   While the review team found an error in relation to one programme, overall the College is undertaking its duties to provide accurate, trustworthy and appropriate information to students, which is approved by both College management and the awarding bodies where necessary. Therefore, the review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.15   In determining its judgement on the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team considers that the Expectation in this area is met and that the risk to student learning opportunities is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice identified, however, it should be noted that the recommendation made in Expectation A2.2 is linked to this area.

3.16   The College produces information through a range of mechanisms and media and there are processes in place for checking the accuracy of information available to students and the public. However, the review team found an inconsistency that was linked to issues with the version control process. Students were satisfied with the level of information they received both prior to their programme commencing and while on programme and have a good understanding of where they can find relevant information. In addition, students were positive about the information available on the VLE and the College website.

3.17   Overall, 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 has a strategic approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities as identified in its Higher Education Strategy which places emphasis on developing a wide range of opportunities for individuals to develop knowledge and skills at high levels matched to national, regional and local economies. Key to this is the Principal's vision for progression routes for further education students into higher education opportunities. These are offered by the College, mapped against the curriculum offer and informed by the LEP skills development agenda.

4.2 The design, although evolving, indicates it meets the Expectation and the College continues to support, develop and embed the design further into practice. It has deliberately chosen to focus on employability in all higher level programmes and now require all full-time programmes to have a minimum of one academic member of staff employed in a relevant industry and all students will have a formal work placement. The College considers the impact of this is that students receive current, relevant professional guidance and work experience opportunities to enhance their learning experience. The Higher Education Strategy Group in conjunction with the Higher Education Implementation Group is charged with continuing to monitor and embed this strategy in the curriculum.

4.3 The College cites as critical the student voice in how it plans student representatives to enhance provision, but recognises it as an area that requires further development so that students can more actively become partners in their learning experience. This is highlighted in Expectation B5.

4.4 These arrangements would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

4.5 The review team reviewed the Higher Education Strategy and curriculum development plans against the deliberate steps the College takes to enhance learning opportunities. This was tested by examining activities identified in documents provided by the College and in meetings with staff, students and employers. Examples were mapped from inception to completion by scrutinising a range of College systems, committee meeting minutes and discussion threads to confirm outcomes and impact.

4.6 With employability and professional practice at the cornerstone of providing enhancement opportunities for students, the College works hard to realise this in the development of their staff and experiential learning opportunities available to students.

4.7 Achieving recognised professional status within an industry sector enhances the student experience and alignment with external professional institutions is a key element of curriculum content. For example, engineering students and Higher Level Apprentices work towards Chartered Engineer status with the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, the Institution of Engineering and Technology and the Royal Aeronautical Society. Similarly, professional placement opportunities are evidenced, for example in the relationship the College has with a large local professional theatre. Higher National Diploma Technical Theatre students on placement with the theatre were required to carry out their duties in line with actual employees and work unsocial hours over the Christmas period so that they understood the nature of the industry they intended to enter and the importance of meeting business needs.

4.8   The College has developed a Scholarship Strategy with the remit to embed continuous academic and technical professional development within teaching practice. In recognition of the need to prioritise a higher education approach to scholarly activity, a substantial bursary is available for staff wishing to commit to scholarly activity and the review team heard examples of some of the opportunities taken up, including one member of the engineering teaching team who has travelled to the USA and Europe to support the completion of his master's degree and he was able to articulate the impact of this and how his learning was informing and improving his classroom practice.

4.9   The close association of continuing professional development and the link this has to the enhancement of the student learning experience is also noted in how the College engages with partner university training and their professional development programmes. Teachers on the University of Northampton programmes have access to the University's professional development framework and an HEA accredited programme that specifically enables staff with high levels of vocational experience to develop their academic confidence and teaching skills. This further enhances staff understanding of the particular nature of teaching on higher education programmes and has direct positive impacts on the learning experience for students.

4.10   At operational level the College continues to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities in various ways and in response to matters raised in College committee meetings and feedback from student voice forums. For example, students raised a concern with the Board of Studies that it is sometimes difficult to get access to certain rooms if staff are not available, thus inhibiting their ability to continue their studies when not in formal taught sessions. The matter was resolved by allowing student card access to spaces after discussion and agreement at the Higher Education Implementation Group and the College Policy and Strategy Group meetings and this was part of strategic enhancement for students.

4.11   The College has a clear strategic vision and continue to use this vision to mature plans to develop a culture of enhancement to enhance student learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.12   In determining its judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team considers that the Expectation in this area is met with the associated risk to student learning opportunities low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice in this area.

4.13   The College has a strategic approach to enhancement which places emphasis on developing a wide range of opportunities for individuals to develop knowledge and skills at high levels matched to national, regional and local economies. There is a deliberate focus on employability in all higher level programmes and the key strategies of academic members of staff employed in a relevant industry and all students undertaking a formal work placement supports this. In addition, there is a close association between continuing professional development and linkages to the enhancement of the student learning experience.

4.14   Overall, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College takes the employability of its students seriously and its activities are embedded within the various strategies of the College and within its approach to curriculum design and assessment. Building on both the College Strategy and Higher Education Strategy, the Higher Education Strategy Group are working on developing a Higher Education Work Experience Strategy as an appendix of the Strategic Plan.

5.2 The College works actively with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and engages with a range of employment and enterprise panels to input directly into the strategies for developing skills in the region. The review team heard an example of where the College had identified a specific skills gap and was working with the LEP to develop programmes in this area.

5.3 Employers are routinely included in discussions about the development of new programmes, and programme teams are strongly encouraged to ensure skills based assessments are included in the overall learning outcomes of the programme. There is also a long-term plan to develop a core entrepreneurship module that could be delivered across all Higher National programmes.

5.4 Programme teams are encouraged to work with local employers to enrich the student learning experience through work placements, master classes, workshops and live briefs. The College has a commitment to employing industry professionals as part-time lecturers and offers them support to gain qualifications in developing their teaching practice. The College also works with its alumni to source work placements and former students also return to the classroom to give master classes and talks to students about their experiences. The College is aiming to formalise this alumni network in future.

5.5 Students receive career guidance from a variety of sources within the College. From the central careers team who provide information, advice and guidance as well as a job finding service; to their lecturers, most of whom have current or recent industry experience and they use this knowledge to provide informed guidance to students.

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 to 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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