



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College)

June 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College). The review took place from 27 to 29 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr David Orford/Dr Alan Howard
- Ms Daphne Rowlands
- Miss Caitlin Oliver (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill 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 (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - the maintenance of academic standards
 - the quality of student learning opportunities
 - the information provided about higher education provision
 - 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 check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

In reviewing The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill 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.

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.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.³ A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).⁴ For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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

² 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 (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College)

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding body **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 The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College).

- The compulsory and challenging communication workshops that make a particularly positive contribution to preparing students to deliver sermons (Expectation B3).
- The fellowship groups, which provide the opportunity for academic, pastoral and personal support and development (Expectation B4).
- The effective communication to the general public and prospective students about the ethos of the College and the nature of the vocational information it provides (Expectation C).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College).

By January 2017:

- articulate more clearly and fully both the structure of the College's deliberative committees and the terms of reference of the Academic Board and other academic committees (Expectation A2.1)
- develop a formal internal policy and procedure for programme design and development that embeds consideration of resource implications and stakeholder feedback (Expectation B1)
- devise and implement a single College assessment policy (Expectation B6)
- formalise and strengthen arrangements for the effective management of placements (Expectation B10).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College) is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the introduction of a standard double-marking template to ensure consistency in recording marking difference resolution and mark agreement (Expectation A3.2)
- the steps the College is taking to develop and implement a robust procedure for academic appeals and student complaints (Expectation B9).

Theme: Student Employability

Student employability is central to the purpose of The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College) since its core mission is to provide a vocational formation for students who wish to enter into various forms of Christian ministry. This purpose is embedded in the learning and teaching approaches within programmes and fostered through work-based learning experiences of direct relevance to the student's calling.

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

About The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College)

The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College) (referred to in this report as the College) is part of The Kingham Hill Trust, which also runs the Kingham Hill School in Oxfordshire. The Trust delegates responsibility for the governance of the College to the College Council, the Finance and General Purposes (F&GP) Committee and the College Leadership Team. The College was founded in by the trustees of the estate of Charles Baring Young, who established the Kingham Hill School in 1886 and The Kingham Hill Trust in 1912 to provide education for disadvantaged young boys. Following Baring Young's death in 1928, his estate in Southgate was donated to found a college for young men who wished to train for Anglican ordination but could not afford a residential university course. In May 1977 the Trust deed was amended to allow the College to admit both men and women to train for ministries in the Anglican Church or any other Protestant denomination. In September 1975 the College secured validation of its programmes with the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). When CNAA closed in 1992, the College approached Middlesex University (the University), with whom it already enjoyed cordial relations, and formed a collaborative partnership that endures to the present.

The College's mission is summed up in the following statement, taken from its Strategic Plan: 'Oak Hill College exists to serve churches worldwide as they carry out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, by equipping their people to serve faithfully and graciously with a grasp of God's revealed truth that is adaptable, deep, broad and integrated'. This principle acts as the main driver for all of the College's educational and formational activity.

The College has various different types of student: ordinands, who are training for ordained ministry in the Church of England; independent students, who may be Anglicans training for lay ministry or members of other denominations, most notably the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches; and students who are training for youth work or cross-cultural/mission work. Student numbers currently stand at 212. Of these, 120 are full-time students, 37 are part-time students (including five at distance), four are creditors, and 51 are auditors.

The College's present complement of teaching staff comprises 13 permanent faculty (10 full-time and three part-time) and five regular visiting lecturers. Since the last QAA review in 2012, an extensive work review has been initiated by the newly appointed Operations Vice-Principal, which has resulted in the creation of several new posts.

The precise nature of the College's relationship with the University has changed since the College's QAA Review for Educational Oversight in June 2012. When the partnership was formed in 1992, the College was granted accredited institution status, which authorised the College to validate its own taught undergraduate and subsequently taught postgraduate programmes. Following the publication of the Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*, the University decided to withdraw accredited institution

status and to replace it with enhanced validated partner status; the College accordingly became an enhanced validated partner in September 2014. The change of status has resulted in a number of adjustments to academic and quality procedures; however, given the long-standing and positive nature of the relationship, the transition on both sides has been a smooth one.

At the time of the last QAA review, the College was in the early stages of a far-reaching review of its programmes. Since then, the College has undertaken two major exercises to streamline its provision. In December 2013 the validation of a new BA (Hons) in Theology - with specialisms in Theological and Pastoral Studies (TPS), Theology for Crossing Cultures (TCC) and Theology and Praxis for Children's and Youth Ministry (TCY) - replaced the separate, discipline-specific awards in Theological and Pastoral Studies (TPS), Theology and World Mission (TWM) and Youth and Children's Mission (YCM). At the same event, the College undertook an early review of its CertHE and foundation degree in Theology (both of which also have specialisms in TPS, TCC and TCY). The College also decided to teach out its small distance education programmes. In November 2015 the validation of a new MTheol in Theology with specialisms in TPS and TCC replaced the separate, discipline-specific awards in TPS and TWM; an MA and PGDip in Theology replaced the awards in TPS; and a new award of PGCert in Theology was introduced. These programmes will be offered for the first time in September 2016.

The College identifies two major challenges that it is currently facing: changes within the sector and changes in regulation and compliance requirements. Over the last few years, a number of the College's fellow providers of theological education have moved away from full-time training to focus on part-time, mixed mode or distance provision. While the College recognises that, for some students, a part time or distance course will, of necessity, be the most practical and workable option, the College remains committed to offering full-time residential training - not least because of its belief that both information and formation are required for ministry, and that formation is best provided face to face and, if possible, in community. This general shift in the sector poses a challenge for the College in that the College thereby finds itself moving against the general trend in theological education.

In common with other alternative providers of higher education, the College has seen the amount of regulatory and compliance work in which it is engaged increase since 2012. While the College acknowledges that regulation does drive up standards and results in a high-quality product for students, the degree of change and the frequency with which new requirements emerge represent a significant challenge for the College as a small provider that must quickly become expert in many different regulatory processes.

The 2012 QAA Review for Educational Oversight resulted in nine recommendations, two of which were considered advisable and seven of which were considered desirable. At the first annual monitoring visit, the College's progress on implementing the action plan was judged acceptable, while on the second and third annual monitoring visits commendable progress was noted. The current review team formed the view that the College has responded systematically and efficiently to the recommendations and effectively built upon the features of good practice identified in 2012. Comments upon specific issues are incorporated within the main body of this report.

Explanation of the findings about The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College)

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College works solely with Middlesex University (the University) as its degree-awarding body. Although the ultimate responsibility for securing the threshold academic standards of qualifications rests with the University, the College is required to comply with its partnership agreements and discharge its duties in the maintenance of academic standards. The Partnership Agreement and memoranda of cooperation (MoC) clearly set out the parameters of responsibility for running agreed programmes. All programmes are required to go through a University validation or revalidation process, which assesses content and resourcing to ensure academic standards are set appropriately. The College also has in place an internal system for the approval of new programmes. Module changes within existing programmes have to go through the University's approval process.

1.2 The arrangements, processes and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 In order to test the Expectation, the review team discussed the relationship between the College and the University with a range of people, including the Principal, the Academic Vice-Principal (AVP) the Operations Vice-Principal (OVP) and the University link tutor.

In addition, the team considered partnership agreements, MoC, validation documents, student handbooks and programme specifications.

1.4 All of the College's programmes have been through both an internal process and a University validation procedure to assess both content and resourcing. Four validation events have taken place in recent years, resulting in a Certificate of Higher Education, a foundation degree, a BA (Hons) degree, an MTheol in Theology and a suite of postgraduate programmes. The review team found evidence that there are effective processes in place for designing, developing and approving new programmes. The College keeps up to date with information about relevant reference points, as evidenced in the minutes of faculty meetings. College programme planning teams take national benchmarks into consideration when a programme is validated or reviewed to ensure that academic standards are appropriate. The College also works closely with its degree-awarding body to ensure that the University's reference points are included when revalidating a programme. All changes within existing programmes follow University validation procedures.

1.5 Programme handbooks, which are issued to all students, make reference to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), specify the number of credits needed for qualifications, and explain learning outcomes. Programme specifications are aligned to FHEQ levels and clearly stipulate the number of credits that make up the qualification.

1.6 College staff met by the review team articulated understanding of their responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards. Students confirmed that they can access programme specifications, which are referenced to the FHEQ and the Quality Code, on the College intranet and website.

1.7 The College fulfils its responsibilities to work within the guidelines of its degree-awarding body in relation to the securing of threshold academic standards of awards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.8 The Kingham Hill Trust delegates responsibility for the governance of the College to the College Council and F&GP committee. Operational matters are overseen by the College Leadership Team. The structure of the College management system is illustrated in organograms showing committee reporting lines and procedures. College documentation also specifies the constitutions and functions of several other groups that form part of the College's management. The Faculty Handbook for staff includes information about staff responsibilities and the format of faculty meetings.

1.9 The College does not itself award qualifications but works with the University to deliver a range of certificate, degree and postgraduate level programmes. The Partnership Agreement and MoC clearly define the College's duty to comply with the University's regulations and set out the responsibilities of the College in this context. The Partnership Agreement states that ultimate responsibility for academic standards remains with the University.

1.10 The academic governance arrangements that are in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.11 The review team tested the Expectation by exploring the College's arrangements for academic governance with the Principal, senior staff and key members of professional support staff. The team also looked at partnership agreements, council policy documents, MoC, organisation charts and the terms of reference of various academic committees.

1.12 The University's academic framework and regulations are clearly outlined in the MoC. College staff whom the review team met demonstrated that they understand the arrangements well, are able to articulate the relationship with the University, and are clear about their responsibilities within the parameters of the framework. The College has forged close links with the University over the years and the maturity of the relationship is reflected in its enhanced partnership status. The University's link tutor attends the Academic Board, Course Evaluation Committee and Assessment Boards.

1.13 Within the College, the Principal takes ultimate strategic responsibility for academic standards, which he delegates to the AVP and OVP, who provide him with weekly updates. The senior team meets monthly to ensure the Principal is kept fully up to date with operational matters. The review team noted that there are no formal terms of reference for the College Leadership Team, which is chaired by the Principal, but that the College Council policy document sets parameters within which the team operates.

1.14 The College's governance, executive and deliberative structures are presented in various organograms, which illustrate reporting lines within the College, and between the College and the University, for student information. The Faculty Handbook provides an outline of the functions of the College's deliberative committees. Responsibility for the oversight of academic policy rests with the Academic Board, which is chaired by the AVP, who provides summary reports to the College Council. The terms of reference that govern the operation of Academic Board comprise just two terms. The review team established that

some functions of the Board of Study, as required by the University, are carried out not by the Academic Board, as some staff believe, but by a separate subcommittee, the Course Evaluation Committee. The newly formed Quality Enhancement Committee, which meets four times a year, is chaired by the AVP and reports to the College Leadership Team. Its agendas are informed by all aspects of quality assurance and it draws on these to produce the Institutional Action Plan, which identifies and coordinates areas for improvement.

1.15 College management and staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, and there are frameworks and regulations in place that ensure effective oversight of academic standards appropriate to higher education. There is evidence that the operation of governance, executive and deliberative committee structures and coherent quality procedures at the College have been effective in ensuring that the College adheres to all relevant regulatory frameworks and fulfils its responsibilities concerning the award of academic credit and qualifications. The review team formed the view, however, that the College risks being over-reliant on custom and practice and would benefit from clarifying and formalising its arrangements for academic governance. The review team **recommends** that the College articulate more clearly and fully both the structure of the College's deliberative committees and the terms of reference of the Academic Board and other academic committees.

1.16 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, but the lack of clarity and/or specificity in relation to terms of reference and lines of delegation and accountability present a moderate level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.17 The College produces programme specifications and curriculum maps that follow the University template and include reference to FHEQ levels and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, other external standards, programme aims and learning outcomes, as well as learning, teaching and assessment methods.

1.18 The College and the University take joint responsibility for producing these documents, which are reviewed annually. Responsibility for distributing them to students lies solely with the College. Programme specifications and curriculum maps are published in the academic life section of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and also on the College website. The College produces individual module descriptions for each unit of study, and work is currently underway to bring these in line with the University template for module descriptions. Module descriptions are published on the VLE only, for reasons concerning intellectual property rights.

1.19 Changes to programme specifications, curriculum maps and module descriptions are approved by the College Academic Board and then referred to the University Law School's Quality and Curriculum Committee for confirmation. When approved, the College publishes the changes immediately on the VLE, but changes to the website are made at the end of the academic year, when new versions are uploaded alongside a document detailing any changes made over the lifetime of each award. A list of all changes made at each meeting of the Academic Board is circulated to all students by email, along with a summary of where to find the most up-to-date information. This information is also uploaded to the quality assurance page of the VLE.

1.20 The College's approach to maintaining definitive records of programmes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.21 To test this Expectation, the review team looked closely at the College's VLE and its documentation, together with the supporting evidence provided in the form of curriculum maps, programme specifications and module descriptions. To confirm that the College's approach was working in practice, the team discussed the topic with senior staff, teaching staff, professional support staff and a range of students.

1.22 The College operates effective processes for maintaining definitive records of all programmes (and subsequent changes to them). Changes to documentation must be approved by the University and the review team found evidence that the College complies with this stipulation. The new template for module descriptions, currently being introduced, provides a more comprehensive description of each module by showing more clearly the relationship between threshold and programme learning outcomes. The template also gives a clear indication of which elements of the assessment package address each learning outcome. Students whom the review team met confirmed that they have access to programmes specifications, curriculum maps and module descriptions through the VLE, and that they find these useful for their studies.

1.23 The review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College maintains thorough definitive records of all of its programmes (and subsequent changes to them) through the use of curriculum maps, programme specifications and module descriptions.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.24 The College is approved by the Church of England for the education of ordinands, and its programmes are subject to the validation and review procedures of the University as its sole awarding body. These procedures are set out in the University's Learning Quality Enhancement Handbook and are summarised in the College's Student Programme Handbook. Development and validation of a new programme starts with an initial application to the University for consideration and approval by its Academic Provision and Approvals Committee. Programme development work, including consultation with external examiners and other stakeholders, is then undertaken by a College programme development team in preparation for consideration of a detailed proposal by a University scrutiny panel. Where validation is agreed, a memorandum of cooperation is signed.

1.25 These processes for programme approval would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.26 In order to test the effectiveness of these processes in practice, the review team discussed programme development and approval with the AVP, OVP and University link tutor. The team also examined the Learning Quality Enhancement Handbook and recent validation reports.

1.27 Robust processes exist for the approval and validation of taught programmes with which the College fully complies. College staff involved in programme development, including the Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) Manager, have knowledge of key external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ, which are discussed at the regular faculty meeting. College staff understand their responsibilities in respect of approval and are supported through liaison with the University's link tutor.

1.28 A formal policy governing the College's internal process for programme design and development does not currently exist but this has not presented problems in the context of setting academic standards, as these are confirmed by the University scrutiny panel, membership of which includes external subject specialist expertise.

1.29 The review team found that sound processes exist for the approval of programmes, which ensure that academic standards are set at an appropriate level in accordance with the academic regulations of the University. The review team concludes that 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

1.30 The College operates its own regulations, policies and practices for assessment that are agreed with the University at validation. Overall responsibility for the assessment of students rests with the College's Assessment Board. Assessment of achievement of threshold module and programme learning outcomes forms the basis for the award of credit in line with the University's regulations. Assessment packages detail the assessment requirements of each module. Criteria for award and classification of each award are set out in the programme specification and Student Programme Handbook. External examiners appointed by the University moderate assessed work, attend the College Assessment Board and submit annual reports.

1.31 The arrangements in place governing the award of credit and qualifications would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.32 The review team explored how effectively these arrangements are operating by holding discussions with a range of staff involved in the delivery and administration of assessment. The team also scrutinised external examiner reports and programme documentation, including assessment packs and sample module descriptions.

1.33 Programme specifications follow a standard template and clearly list the learning outcomes and the associated teaching and learning methods and assessment strategies. As indicated in paragraph 1.22, the new module template shows more fully and clearly the direct relationship between achievement of specific threshold and programme learning outcomes and the individual components of the assessment package. Detailed curriculum maps provide the learner with information on which module combinations enable completion of all the requirements of an award.

1.34 External examiner reports confirm that the academic standards set for the awards are appropriate for the qualification and comparable to similar programmes in other providers. A process exists for supporting students with additional learning needs, and staff confirmed that any reasonable adjustments recommended for assignments must still enable learning outcomes to be tested appropriately. Assessment Boards operate according to the requirements of the University, and external examiners report that they are well-prepared and properly conducted.

1.35 The review team noted an issue raised by an external examiner relating to the practice of using sticky notes to record discussions and decisions relating to resolution of mark differences arising during double-marking of assignments. The unstructured and vulnerable format of these records could compromise consistency and transparency in the award of credit and qualifications. The review team **affirms** the introduction of a standard double-marking template to ensure consistency in recording marking difference resolution and mark agreement.

1.36 In respect of the award of credit and qualifications and the maintenance of academic standards, appropriate regulations and procedures exist at the College and are implemented effectively. The review team concludes that the Expectation is 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

1.37 In line with its Partnership Agreement, programmes delivered by the College are subject to the validation and review procedures of the University. These procedures are set out in the University's Learning Quality Enhancement Handbook and are summarised in the College's Student Programme Handbook. Programmes are subject to formal review and revalidation every six years and consideration is given to how the programme has changed since the last review or validation, performance in the intervening years, alignment with current external benchmarks, the continuing business case, and any planned changes or enhancements. Between reviews, programmes are subject to ongoing monitoring by the College's academic committees and through the production of an annual report for the University. External examiners are asked to report whether standards set for the award(s) are appropriate for the qualification(s) and whether the standards of student performance are equivalent to other UK institutions.

1.38 The College's approach to maintaining academic standards through programme review and monitoring would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.39 To evaluate its effectiveness in relation to the maintenance of academic standards, the review team discussed the programme review process with the AVP and OVP. The team also explored the topic by studying a range of documentation, including programme review and annual monitoring reports (AMRs), external examiner reports and minutes of relevant meetings.

1.40 The review team found evidence that the College fully engages with the agreed requirements for review and monitoring, including production for the University of a detailed AMR and associated action plan, which is also considered internally by the Academic Board and discussed at faculty meetings. External examiner reports referenced by the AMR confirm that UK threshold academic standards are achieved on all programmes delivered by the College. College committees, including the Academic Board, the Quality Enhancement Committee and faculty meetings, fulfil their role in monitoring academic standards and routinely consider external examiner reports, student feedback and other intelligence. This deliberation informs development of a College-wide action plan.

1.41 Programme reviews are organised by the University and are similar in practice to the validation process undertaken when a new programme is proposed. As with validation, consideration of academic standards is integral and the review process involves external assessors and interviews with current students. The College's most recent review event in 2015, for postgraduate programmes in Theology, encompassed review of existing provision and validation of a proposed new programme. Review documentation confirms full engagement with the process by the College.

1.42 The College is fulfilling the requirements for monitoring and review agreed with the University, and these processes explicitly address whether UK threshold academic standards are being achieved and maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is 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

1.43 The College makes provision for the use of external and independent expertise in a variety of ways to set and maintain academic standards. Validation events are required to include externals, to contribute towards the setting of academic standards. External and independent expertise may be provided by external examiners, subject specialists from other higher education providers, or serving church ministers or church leaders.

1.44 External examiners are appointed by the University on recommendation from the College - a nomination form is submitted for approval. External examiners may contribute towards setting and maintaining academic standards from the validation of programmes through to the assessment of student achievement in assessment.

1.45 All coursework assignments and examination papers must be sent to the relevant external examiner prior to distribution to students. Staff are advised of their responsibility to prepare work for the scrutiny of external examiners in the College's marking guide. External examiners are assigned a key role in assuring student achievement of academic standards by reviewing grades at the conclusion of the assessment process. They provide annual oral and written reports, which include comments on whether assessment processes and procedures have been conducted appropriately. The University's link tutor attends Assessment Boards at which such oral reports are received from external examiners.

1.46 The College is reviewed by the Church of England's own quality systems; the most recent review was conducted in 2016 and will confirm that the College's provision continues to meet the Church's vocational formation criteria. The University also reviews the College's programmes every six years, incorporating external expertise and charting any changes to units. In addition, the College produces an annual self-assessment report for the Church of England.

1.47 The opportunities for externals to provide independent expertise to assist in setting and maintaining academic standards would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.48 To evaluate how effectively the College makes use of external expertise, the review team discussed the College's practice with the Principal; teaching staff who deal with external examiners; and with alumni, employers and placement providers. The team also examined external examiner reports, responses to those reports and programme development documentation.

1.49 The review team found evidence that good use is made of independent and external expertise throughout the programme cycle. The College considers external views within its internal programme design and development process to ensure that academic and professional standards are appropriate and that the proposed programme fits with strategic objectives. Market research is undertaken and employers have some input into the process.

Subsequent validation events, which follow the University's procedures, also involve external expertise, including employers and external assessors.

1.50 Each College programme has an external examiner in line with the MoC. External examiners provide advice when a new programme is being reviewed, as evidenced by the foundation degree in Theology. They examine particular disciplines such as Biblical Studies, Theology, Church History, Practical Theology and Ministry, rather than whole programmes, to provide assurance that academic standards are broadly comparable with similar provision offered elsewhere. They also scrutinise learning outcomes and levels of student achievement to provide assurance that academic standards are being maintained through teaching, learning and assessment. The review team saw external examiner reports that confirm that academic standards are secure and assessment decisions sound.

1.51 The Church of England scrutinises the College against its criteria; a recent periodic review will confirm that the College meets the church's vocational formation criteria. Many teaching staff are also active practitioners, which enhances lectures by incorporating current external expertise, which students find valuable.

1.52 The review team found that evidence from meetings and documentation, including scrutiny of external examiner reports, shows that the College is effectively using external expertise at key stages of the quality cycle to ensure that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met 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/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

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

1.54 All seven of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met; the associated level of risk is judged low in six of them and moderate in one, with one recommendation and one affirmation arising.

1.55 While there is a moderate level of risk associated with Expectation A2.1 on the grounds that, without action, serious problems could arise over time, the recommendation can be met swiftly by the College, by clarifying, articulating fully and formalising current academic governance structures. This will not require or result in major structural, operational or procedural change.

1.56 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval

Findings

2.1 When a new programme is proposed, a College programme planning team is appointed, normally comprising the AVP; relevant faculty and academic administrative staff; and the QAE Manager. Initial internal consideration of the business and academic case is followed by a request to the University's Academic Provision and Approvals Committee for approval to develop the programme for validation. Documentation including programme specifications, curriculum maps and module descriptions is produced by the Planning Team, taking into account Subject Benchmark Statements and feedback from students and other stakeholders. The final proposal is considered by a University validation panel, which attends the College to meet staff, students and the programme planning team. The validation panel includes external assessors as well as University staff. Where validation is agreed, a final MoC is signed and the outcome is communicated to College staff and students.

2.2 The approach to programme design and development, and the processes and procedures for programme approval, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 In order to test the Expectation, the review team discussed programme design, development and approval with students; relevant College staff including the AVP, OVP and professional support staff; and the University link tutor. The team also read documentation relating to recent validation events.

2.4 The College has engaged in four validation events since 2010. Validation reports confirm full compliance by the College with the University's approval processes. College staff understand their responsibilities in respect of approval and are supported through liaison with the University's link tutor.

2.5 Engagement with external stakeholders, including employers, makes a positive contribution to programme development. For example, when recently revising its postgraduate Theology programmes, The College undertook analysis of provision at other theological colleges and surveyed church ministers and alumni. This engagement was commended in the subsequent validation report and in future the College intends to be proactive in consulting external stakeholders at the initial design stage and to solicit ideas for development. Programme proposals are also discussed at away days with faculty; student involvement is evident in a number of contexts, including input from focus groups and student representatives. The College is cognisant of the desirability of involving staff responsible for the provision of learning support materials, such as the library, to ensure resource implications of programme development are considered and planned. While it is evident that the College takes its responsibilities for programme design and development seriously, the review team noted that internal processes and procedures are not fully documented in policy. In order to assure consistency and robustness of internal processes, the review team **recommends** that the College develop a formal internal policy and

procedure for programme design and development that embeds consideration of resource implications and stakeholder feedback.

2.6 The review team found that processes for the design and development of programmes, and sound procedures for their approval, have operated satisfactorily in recent validation events. Although the College's internal procedures are not formally documented, this is a matter that the College can swiftly remedy. 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

2.7 As stipulated in the MoC, the College operates and administers its own recruitment and admissions processes based on criteria agreed at validation and approved by the University. The admissions process is underpinned by entry requirements set out in programme specifications and programme booklets. Applications are made directly to the College using an application form. The University maintains oversight of the processes by gathering data on applications, offers and acceptances, and on student completion and retention for all modules and programmes.

2.8 The College's approach to recruitment, selection and admission ensures that its policies and processes adhere to the principles of fair admission. This would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.9 To test how effectively the College's approach works in practice, the review team discussed policies and procedures with senior staff and professional support staff with responsibility for recruitment, selection and admission, and talked to a range of students about their experiences. The team also considered relevant documentation, including MoC, programme specifications and programme booklets.

2.10 Recruitment and admissions are overseen by the Admissions and Marketing Events (AME) Manager, who reports to the OVP and has regular meetings with members of the College Leadership Team. An Admissions Officer was appointed in February 2015 and supports the work of the AME Manager; together they form the admissions team. The team works with a set of clear, precise steps for every aspect of the admission process, along with a timescale for each activity. The progress of every application is tracked and recorded appropriately through each stage of the process. A detailed overview of the applications process is available on the College website and includes key deadlines and closing dates. Routine monitoring and review of the admissions process is carried out to ensure the process is working well. Feedback is gathered from attendees at open mornings, and prospective students who decline offers. Statistics on applications, offers and acceptances are compiled and reflected upon within AMRs for the University. The annual student survey includes questions about publicity, expectations prior to arrival and whether those expectations have been met.

2.11 The admissions process is well-structured and designed to remove potential barriers to entry. Care is taken to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and equally, for example in relation to information about health, finance and accommodation needs. Permission is sought from applicants to share sensitive information with relevant members of staff, for example with the Academic Registrar, who helps with applications for Disabled Students' Allowance support.

2.12 Students confirmed that the recruitment and admission process is effective and easy to understand, with clear deadlines. Open mornings and interview days help prospective students decide if the College is the right place for them. Open mornings comprise a presentation about the College, the programmes available, a sample lecture

and a tour, as well as an opportunity to meet current students and staff. Those who subsequently apply and who meet the basic admissions criteria are invited to an interview day, which includes a further presentation from the Principal, a personal interview with a member of faculty, an individual discussion with a member of the admissions team, an opportunity to sit in on a live lecture, and another opportunity to meet current students, all of which are highly valued by students.

2.13 Both the AVP and the Principal may be consulted, as appropriate, about borderline decisions. Some applicants are asked to submit an additional piece of work in order to assess academic ability or theological understanding. Final decisions are communicated in writing by the admissions team. The AME Manager prepares a letter for unsuccessful applicants, in consultation with the AVP. This letter includes a general indication of why the application was not successful; extensive details are not provided unless requested directly.

2.14 Where changes to programmes are made during an admissions cycle, prospective students are kept informed and applications are not processed until the outcome of the validation/review event is known. Internally, information regarding such changes is posted on the VLE and a general letter is sent out to the College community. Current students who are affected by the change are sent a letter and are asked to confirm that they are happy to transfer across to the new award.

2.15 Guidance and training are provided for staff and current students involved in the admissions process: this includes conduct of interviews; briefings for students giving tours and welcoming applicants; and aide memoires and general training for the admissions team. The AME Manager provides occasional briefings at faculty meetings to ensure all staff are kept up to date with the detail of the admissions process.

2.16 The College's arrangements for recruitment, selection and admission currently meet the Schwartz Principles for fair admission. The College is, nevertheless, currently engaging external consultants in a wide-ranging review of its admissions policy, which is intended to strengthen alignment with the Quality Code, *Chapter B2* and address the Church of England's prompts concerning the provision of equality and diversity training. Senior staff are considering recommendations and expect to complete the review in time for changes to be implemented ahead of the 2016-17 admissions cycle.

2.17 The College's recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures currently adhere to the principles of fair admission, are underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes, and stand to be strengthened by enhanced monitoring and review policies. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.18 The College's approach to learning and teaching is defined in its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which outlines the College's commitment to enhancing teaching. The University requires the College to comment on teaching and learning within the College's AMR. The Faculty Handbook provides guidelines for what is expected of teaching staff, including a section on appraisal, review and personal development. The College does not require staff to have a teaching qualification, although it supports staff who wish to pursue further training. Almost all of the College's intake are mature students, who arrive at the College with varying levels of academic ability. The College is aware of the challenges this poses and the importance of addressing them.

2.19 The approach to learning and teaching and the associated processes described in the documentation provided by the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.20 The review team tested the Expectation by discussing induction, staff development and support with the AVP and a range of teaching staff, and by talking to students and alumni about their experiences of teaching and learning at the College. The team also examined staff curricula vitae, external examiner reports and anonymised documentation relating to teaching observation and appraisal.

2.21 The College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy contains clear aims and provides a framework designed to support the work of teaching staff, outlining the methods by which the College monitors the quality of teaching. The Institutional Action Plan and AMR draw together plans for enhancing teaching and learning and provide an effective basis for measuring progress. The College has become a member of the Higher Education Academy and disseminates information to staff by email.

2.22 Teaching staff are well-qualified academically and/or bring with them a wealth of relevant theological experiences. Students confirm that teaching at the College is good and are positive about the contribution made by lecturers' personal research, which enriches their lectures. External examiner reports comment positively on the unique combination of academic and pastoral skills provided by teaching staff and the standard of learning opportunities. The compulsory and challenging communications workshops that make a particularly positive contribution to preparing students for delivering sermons is **good practice**. Students particularly value the 'uncomfortable but helpful' experience of working with external communications consultants, with their emphasis on personal presentation skills rather than content. The College further enables students to develop as independent learners by recording lectures, which are made available within a few days of the lecture and are used for back-up and revision purposes. Students welcome the improved use of the VLE while stating there is still room for improvement overall.

2.23 Applicants for teaching posts undergo an interview process that involves giving a presentation and answering questions about their pedagogic experience. New staff are allocated a mentor and undergo an induction. Although the College has no formal policy on the observation of teaching, the College does, in practice, have an effective system of

teaching observations conducted by peer review and more formally by the AVP, who observes at least one class per member of faculty every year. Observations are recorded on a pro forma and discussed between the observer and observed, with a paper copy being sent to the QAE Manager. Examples of good practice from the observations are collated and shared at faculty meetings. Teaching staff whom the review team met demonstrated a thorough understanding of the review process, which is clearly described in the Faculty Handbook. They confirmed that teaching is discussed at faculty meetings and at the Course Evaluation Committee and this has included consideration of how best to address the issue of the variable levels of academic ability represented by the College's intake.

2.24 Findings from peer and AVP observation feed into staff development and annual appraisal conducted by the AVP. The appraisal system has recently been restructured and draws on the observation peer and AVP observation, together with self-reflection, to identify development needs and set goals. Pre and post-appraisal forms show evidence of reflection and identify aims for improvement for the forthcoming year. The process effectively identifies training needs, which are addressed on an individual need basis. Any issues arising with under-performing staff are dealt with by the AVP. Some whole-College training takes place to meet specific training needs, such as safeguarding. The College has a budget to support conference attendance and training; staff are encouraged to attend conferences and become members of professional bodies. A two-term period of study leave has recently been reintroduced. A staff development log is maintained.

2.25 The College has an effective approach to learning and teaching based on continuous improvement and an emphasis on readiness for employment. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.26 The College is responsible for providing support to students and for the provision of resources as outlined in its MoC with the University. Provision includes induction, study skills, formative feedback, disability support, library and learning resources including the VLE, personal development and pastoral support, careers advice, financial advice and assistance with accommodation.

2.27 The range of services and resources provided to students would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.28 The review team tested the Expectation by meeting teaching staff who act as fellowship group leaders, and professional support staff, including the librarian. The team also discussed the College's student services and learning resources with current students and alumni. The team examined student handbooks and programme specifications and received a demonstration of the VLE.

2.29 The review team found evidence of a range of effective services and resources offered to students at each stage of their College experience. For example, on arrival students benefit from an induction that helps them make the transition to higher level academic programmes. Students whom the review team met reported that they found the initial induction assignment 'Word of God' particularly valuable in assisting them with academic writing. They are provided with the Student Handbook and other information, which they report as helpful. A valuable and structured College opening week programme, which students find useful, provides them with information about their programme and academic life, and includes an introduction to the library and to fellowship groups. Student focus groups have commended the usefulness of the library induction in particular, and library resources were singled out for praise in the postgraduate Theology programme review.

2.30 Services and support mechanisms are outlined in student and staff handbooks and in programme specifications. Study skills sessions covering note-taking and essay-writing are available three times a year to students who think they would benefit from additional support. Tutors offer face-to-face feedback on drafts of dissertations/projects and comprehensive and developmental feedback is given on assignments, which enables students to reach their potential. Students confirm that both the quality and timeliness of feedback has improved recently. External examiner reports commend the standard of feedback at the College.

2.31 The review team found evidence that programmes are adequately resourced and that resourcing issues are scrutinised during validation. In practice, emphasis tends to be placed on library stock and publications; senior staff confirm there is a generous library budget and teaching staff report that good working relationships with library staff ensure that reading lists are resourced. The College library is open 24 hours; students are satisfied with the level of service offered and comment favourably on the helpfulness of library staff. The VLE has recently been upgraded and a support officer has been appointed to assist staff. Student satisfaction with the VLE and academic support has increased.

2.32 Personal development for full-time students is facilitated through the fellowship groups, which comprise a mix of students from a variety of programmes. Groups meet weekly to provide support and friendship to their members. They are led by a faculty member who meets with individual members of the group each term, is likely to be the first point of contact for advice and personal issues, and is able to provide tutorial advice. Students reported that fellowship groups constitute an integral part of College life and were enthusiastic about the role the groups play in providing pastoral care and academic support, as well as the opportunity they provide for students to develop their interpersonal skills. The fellowship groups, which provide the opportunity for academic, pastoral and personal support and development, are **good practice**.

2.33 Additional support is available as required, for example for reasonable adjustments to examinations and assignments. Students are encouraged to make known any specific support requirements they may have when they apply, and disability data is included in the AMR. A vocational formation is integral to academic programmes and supplemented by the distribution to students of information about relevant job opportunities. Students whom the review team met know how to access support, including financial advice and help with accommodation, and confirmed that College staff are very approachable and operate an open-door policy.

2.34 The College has appropriate resources and services in place to enable student development and achievement. These include supportive staff, easily accessible support mechanisms, and good liaison between teaching and library staff. The review team concludes that the 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

2.35 The College's commitment to engage students as partners in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational experience is formalised in the Partnership Agreement with the University, which states that 'the partner institution shall provide a range of opportunities to provide feedback' and in particular 'boards of study for the programmes shall be established by the partner institution to provide a forum for staff and students to discuss delivery, development and enhancement'.

2.36 The College offers a range of formal and informal opportunities for student engagement, which is set out in the Student Handbook. Formal provision is made for student representation on key College committees, including the Academic Board, Course Evaluation Committee and College Council, where 'student matters' is a standard agenda item. Students are also represented on the Student Common Room Committee, which comprises six student representatives who cover all years of study and programme specialisms. The Senior Student and the Student Common Room Secretary meet weekly during term time with the AVP and OVP. Through these committees and meetings, students have the opportunity to offer feedback on various aspects of their educational experience, as well as contribute to matters such as programme design and development. Student engagement is also facilitated via student-evaluation forms (SEFs) at the end of each module and the Annual Student Survey at the end of the academic year. The residential College community is intended to provide further opportunities for informal student engagement.

2.37 The deliberate steps taken by the College to engage all students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience would allow the Expectation to be met in.

2.38 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the College's approach to student engagement by discussing the matter with the Principal, senior staff and a range of students and alumni, including past and present student representatives. The team also looked at a range of documents, including minutes of committee meetings.

2.39 The review team found evidence that the College effectively employs three main methods of student engagement: surveys at the end of modules and programmes; the use of student representatives; and informal discussions. Emails are sent out at appropriate times to encourage students to stand for election as a student representative or to encourage students to complete SEFs. Students reported that these methods are positively engaging the majority of students in the quality assurance and enhancement of their educational opportunities. The review team noted, however, and the College acknowledges, that the current response rate of 50 per cent to surveys and the recent reduction in the proportion of students who say they feel involved in quality assurance activity might indicate otherwise. Senior staff suggest that the uncharacteristically low response rate may be due to a variety of factors: survey fatigue, the demands of coursework and family life, and/or the perception that the College could have responded more swiftly to the feedback it gathered about student workload. As a result of these reflections, the College has formulated plans to extend its repertoire of methods of engaging students to include, for example, drop-in lunch sessions to give all students the opportunity to chat with a member of the College Leadership Team.

2.40 The College has recently formalised the training the QAE Manager provides for student representatives, which includes an overview of the role, an introduction to the Quality Code, and an explanation of how Academic Board and Course Evaluation Committee meetings work. Student representatives confirmed that the training they received helped them understand their role.

2.41 Students are involved in design and development of programmes and modules in various ways, including: review of recent student feedback; focus groups during the design process; meetings with validation panels; and serving on the panel itself. Students also reported that they are aware of external examiner reports and know where to find them.

2.42 It was clear to the review team that students appreciate the informal opportunities they have to discuss their educational experiences with staff. Students are able to talk with staff at lunch and dinner, as well as before and after times of worship, which further facilitates student engagement. The student submission to this report states that the relationship between faculty and the student body is excellent and this contributes to the very close working relationship between staff and students. Students consider that the quality of this relationship makes staff open to receiving feedback from students.

2.43 The College currently surveys graduates in connection with programme reviews, but is considering doing this more regularly, perhaps at three, five and seven years after graduation, to assess the extent to which their studies at the College are benefiting them as they develop in their ministry.

2.44 The College reviews the student feedback cycle and other forms of engagement regularly to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The key performance indicator used is the proportion of students who submit SEFs term by term, normally approximately 50 per cent. This is monitored by the QAE Manager and efforts are made to encourage greater engagement from targeted student groups. The College continually improves its methods of student engagement by adjusting SEFs, usually to focus on a particular area such as student workload in October 2015.

2.45 Students at the College feel fully engaged in their educational experience and have sufficient opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of their learning opportunities. The systems in place to engage students as partners in their educational experience are effective, as are plans for ongoing improvement of student engagement. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.46 The College operates its own regulations, policies and practices for assessment that are agreed with the University at validation. Overall responsibility for the assessment of students rests with the College's Assessment Board. The Student Programme Handbook, Faculty Handbook and termly marking instructions provide guidance to students and staff about the operation of assessment. A presentation entitled 'Tackling Assignments', provided by the AVP during opening week, also explains the College's regulations and procedures relating to assessment, and where further information on these can be found. An assessment pack is produced for each module, detailing assignments and other modes of assessment. All assignments are either double or sample-marked internally and subject to moderation by the external examiner. An Assessment Board operates for all programmes and is attended by external examiners, who provide oral feedback to the College at the Assessment Board meeting and in a formal report submitted thereafter.

2.47 The processes and procedures adopted in respect of assessment would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.48 The review team held discussions with a range of staff involved in the delivery and administration of teaching, learning and assessment and talked to a representative group of current students about their experiences of assessment. The team also explored the effectiveness of assessment processes by scrutinising external examiner reports and programme documentation, including assessment packs and guidance on assessment produced for staff and students.

2.49 The Student Programme Handbook is well-structured and provides detail on all aspects of assessment. Similar information is provided for staff in the Faculty Handbook. However, a single College policy on assessment regulations does not currently exist, even though the College is able to operate its own regulations for assessment in agreement with the University. To help ensure that assessment procedures are robust and implemented consistently, the review team **recommends** that the College devise and implement a single College assessment policy.

2.50 External examiners confirm that assessment processes at the College work effectively. Assessment methods are appropriately varied, with some modules, for example, combining presentations, essay writing and exams. In general, external examiners praise the quality of feedback provided to students, although some inconsistency in the format of feedback, even within the same assignment on larger modules, has been noted. A new standardised feedback form and predetermined feedback return dates have been introduced to improve consistency in the quality and timeliness of feedback. Students welcome these steps and provide mainly positive feedback about assessment and feedback at the College, although some concerns about volume of work, particularly in term 3, remain.

2.51 External examiner reports also confirm that the general standard of writing and presentation in assessments is high and students express appreciation for the support

available from tutors on matters of assessment and feedback. Study skills training is accompanied by study skills videos on the VLE, and information in the student handbooks and the library. Support and advice is provided to enable students to understand and avoid plagiarism, although plagiarism-detection software is not available for use within the College by students or staff. Penalties are applied to work submitted after the deadline or work that exceeds mandatory word limits. While no problems are evident, implementation of penalties for over-length work is largely reliant on accurate self-declaration of word counts by students.

2.52 Internal processes for considering extenuating circumstances and supporting students with additional needs are agreed with the University at validation. Students indicate some confusion over recently revised responsibilities for granting adjustments to assignment deadlines, but staff confirm that such cases are now dealt with by the Senior Registrar and communicated to markers via a shared information drive. More serious extenuating circumstances are given consideration at the Assessment Board, where reasonable adjustments can be made in agreeing a student's final results with the external examiner.

2.53 The College operates sufficiently robust processes of assessment to enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. The review team 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

2.54 The University's policies, which govern the use of external examiners, permit the College to make recommendations to the University about the appointment of external examiners. Once approved and appointed, external examiners receive an induction from both the University and the College.

2.55 External examiners approve changes to modules to ensure the currency and consistency of programmes. Coursework assignments and examination papers are sent to external examiners for approval, prior to their distribution to students to ensure that academic standards and learning outcomes are appropriate. External examiners are appointed to play a vital part in Assessment Boards prior to the awarding of credit or qualifications, in a process governed by agreements with the University. Assessment Boards follow a set agenda and are minuted. Exceptions, including extenuating circumstances, are discussed and noted for the record. Final grades are agreed, having been ratified by external examiners and the University link tutor. The University provides a template for external examiner reports in which they are required to comment on the level of the programme, the assignments and student achievement, and on the standard of marking and feedback, with suggestions for improvement where appropriate. Their comments are taken into consideration when producing the AMR. External examiner reports are sent to both the University and to the College, where they are discussed. The AVP sends the College's responses direct to the external examiners, copying in the University.

2.56 The arrangements in place for external examiners would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.57 The review team tested the Expectation by discussing the way the College makes use of external examiners with teaching staff, the University's link tutor and students, including student representatives. The team also scrutinised external examiner reports, responses to the reports, minutes of Assessment Boards, and AMRs. A demonstration of the VLE provided the review team with additional information about the availability of external examiner reports.

2.58 The review team found ample evidence that external examiners are used effectively by the College; for example, they contribute to initial discussions about new programmes. Guidance on marking procedures clearly sets out the role of the external examiner from the College's point of view and explains unambiguously the timescale to which tutors must adhere. Staff understand well the role of the external examiner, which is described in their Faculty Handbook.

2.59 External examiner reports examined by the review team confirm that academic standards are broadly comparable with similar programmes offered elsewhere and that the College fulfils all its responsibilities in relation to external examiners. Reports confirm that assessment is fair and accurate and that the standard of feedback is good. Minutes of Assessment Board meetings show that opportunities for external examiners to provide oral feedback are provided as an integral part of a set of clear and robust procedures.

2.60 The review team noted details of the process by which external examiner reports are received and acted upon. The AVP receives a copy of each report and makes a formal response, copied to the University. The reports are discussed at faculty meetings and at the

meeting of Academic Board in term 1, after which they are uploaded to the VLE. The AMR comments upon points made in external examiner reports, while outcomes are incorporated within the Institutional Action Plan, which is monitored and reviewed by the Quality Enhancement Committee. Students whom the review team met confirmed that they are aware that reports are available on the VLE, although none present had met an external examiner. External examiner reports are discussed at Course Evaluation Committee meetings, where there is student representation.

2.61 The College makes scrupulous use of external examiners in line with its agreement with the University. The review team concludes that the Expectation is 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

2.62 Steps are taken both by the College and the University to ensure that monitoring and review are undertaken systematically and consistently and achieve an appropriate balance between enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards. Programmes are subject to formal review and revalidation every six years in accordance with the University's procedures outlined in its Learning Quality Enhancement Handbook. In addition, the College produces an AMR and associated action plan for the University. Programmes are subject to ongoing monitoring by the College's deliberative academic committees and regular faculty meeting. Intelligence, including external examiner reports, student feedback, retention, progression and employment data is used in monitoring and review. Changes to modules or programmes arising from these processes must be approved by the University. Students are represented in monitoring and review in different ways, including through the student feedback cycle and membership of committees.

2.63 The procedures for monitoring and review would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.64 The review team discussed monitoring and review processes with the AVP and OVP, faculty and the University link tutor. The team also explored the effectiveness of the College's approach by analysing recent AMRs and checking the Learning Quality Enhancement Handbook and minutes of College committees.

2.65 Procedures for programme review and production of AMRs operate in accordance with the University's Learning Quality Enhancement Handbook and are well-understood by College staff. AMRs are suitably detailed and draw on a range of evidence in reflecting on the operation of programmes, maintenance of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities. Six-yearly programme reviews leading to revalidation include detailed consideration of the quality of learning opportunities and the learning environment, and a meeting with current students is included in the review team's visit to the College. Review reports and other documentation confirm full engagement by the College in the process.

2.66 Internal College processes and procedures for monitoring and review are not formally written in College policy and some committees do not have formal or full terms of reference (see Expectation A2.2). However, the review team found that the Academic Board and Course Evaluation Committee do fulfil a monitoring role and routinely consider evidence, including SEFs, external examiner reports and other sources of feedback. Oversight is maintained by the Principal and College Leadership Team. In addition, the relatively recently established Quality Enhancement Committee seeks to identify areas for improvement in provision and to inform College-wide enhancement priorities.

2.67 Recent changes to module delivery provide evidence of responsiveness to feedback through the monitoring process. For example, the Academic Board internally approved a change arising from student feedback to increase contact time for Biblical Theology to enable material to be covered in greater depth. This and all such changes are formally approved by the University's Law School Quality Committee, a process that is well-understood by staff responsible for module delivery and which benefits from effective arrangements for liaison through the University link tutor.

2.68 The College adheres to University requirements for programme review and operates regular and systematic processes for programme monitoring. The review team 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

2.69 The College, in framing its procedures for academic appeals and student complaints, is ultimately governed by its Partnership Agreement with the University. Current procedures are detailed in the Student Programme Handbook and on the VLE. However, the College is in the process of reviewing its appeals and complaints procedures, drawing on University policies and on the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework.

2.70 Academic appeals and student complaints are handled, in the first instance, under College regulations. The College's current appeals and complaints procedures prioritise constructive engagement by encouraging informal resolution, primarily through discussion by the parties concerned. This aligns with the College's emphasis on partnership and its Christian ethos.

2.71 In line with the MoC, the existing concerns, complaints and grievance procedures make it clear that students may have recourse to the University or to the OIA but that 'procedures of the College and, where relevant, the University must have been exhausted before referral to the OIA may take place'.

2.72 Appeals and complaints procedures are accessible to students. Both sets of current procedures can be found in the Student Programme Handbook and set out clearly the circumstances in which they may be used and where students should go for advice and guidance. Both sets also include a statement to the effect that both appeals and complaints will be handled with appropriate confidentiality, while the new set makes it clear that 'the College expects that students and staff will treat both the complaints and appeals processes and each other with respect'.

2.73 Key staff have already attended training on handling appeals and complaints and are able to give advice and support. Training for faculty will be provided when the new procedures have been introduced, followed by annual updates. One area to be clarified in the revised appeals and complaints procedure is what additional support will be provided for students with specific learning requirements. This will be considered as the revised policies are introduced and embedded.

2.74 Current developments designed to improve the academic appeals and student complaints procedures, which include strengthened monitoring and review processes, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.75 The review team tested the College's approach to academic appeals and student complaints by discussing the rationale for the review with both students and professional support staff with responsibility for managing the review. The team also scrutinised a number of documents, including the MoC, current procedures and improvements proposed as a result of the review.

2.76 The review team found that the current academic appeals and student complaints procedures do not contain information for students regarding referral of their complaints to the University or the OIA. Furthermore, monitoring and review of the appeals and complaints

procedures are currently ineffective, since all cases are being resolved through informal means and these means are not subject to monitoring and review at all. The College has, however, already recognised that both areas need attention and has taken steps to remedy the shortcomings as part of the current review activity. The review team **affirms** the steps the College is taking to develop and implement a robust procedure for academic appeals and student complaints.

2.77 The proposed new procedures are clearer in terms of setting out who may use them and in assuring students that they may raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage. In addition, the new procedures stipulate that cases may only be referred after the issuance of a completion of procedures letter by the College. The new procedures articulate those matters about which students may submit grievances to the University and those for which the College retains ultimate responsibility but which may be referred externally to the OIA.

2.78 The College acknowledges that more work remains to be done to establish procedures for monitoring and review in relation to academic appeals and student complaints procedures. For example, the academic administration team is considering establishing a central record of all complaints and appeals along with their outcomes, which will be monitored to identify trends and/or areas for improvement that can then be brought to the attention of the Academic Board or the College Leadership Team.

2.79 In considering the steps the College has taken, and is taking, to develop and implement a robust procedure for academic appeals and student complaints, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.80 The College places great importance on work placements for its students. Programmes are vocational and practical experience is integral to achievement of qualifications; students undertake compulsory placements in line with their specialisms. Programme handbooks contain comprehensive placement descriptors that outline what is expected of students.

2.81 Oversight of placements is undertaken by the Director of Placements in conjunction with specialist teaching staff at the College; external church staff who are providing placement opportunities; and professional support staff, who manage administrative processes, such as safeguarding checks. The Safeguarding Policy provides a clear outline of the safeguarding the College is obliged to undertake. Students are given information about placements before they arrive at the College and prior to the start of their studies. Separate booklets are provided for ordinands and independent students; students are invited to meet the Director of Placements, who puts them in settings that are relevant to their intended sphere of ministry. Information is sent to the intended placement supervisors, who are also invited to the College for a general briefing day.

2.82 The arrangements the College has in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.83 In test how well the College's approach is working in practice, the review team met students who had been or were currently on placement, as well as the Director of Placements and a number of placement providers. The team also looked at documentation provided to placement providers, student placement reports and the College's own record systems for managing placements. Although a placement booklet is distributed to supervisors, the College acknowledges that it would be helpful to provide placement supervisors with a dedicated separate supervisor training tool.

2.84 It was clear that students appreciate and understand the information they are given about placements in the Student Handbook, the placement handbook and booklets, as well as on the VLE. They articulated clearly to the review team what is expected of them during placements, understand that placements are graded pass/fail, and are positive about the benefits of putting theory into practice in the work environment.

2.85 The College has recently appointed a new safeguarding officer, who is based within the human resources department and is a member of the College Ethics Committee. The review team saw evidence that safeguarding checks are conducted on every student on arrival at the College and are recorded on a database. The College gathers and maintains a log of the safeguarding policies of all organisations providing placement opportunities, although it was not clear to the review team how often this is monitored.

2.86 The review team saw evidence that placements are confirmed to providers by email, giving details of the student together with some personal information. Placement providers whom the team met demonstrated a good understanding of what was expected of them during the student's placement. Placement supervisors are required to complete a report on students to confirm attendance and appropriate engagement with

the placement. The report is discussed by the supervisor and student and subsequently reviewed by the Director of Placements, who assesses whether the student has successfully completed the work placement.

2.87 Although placements provide relevant settings for certain assignments and the opportunity for students to produce evidence for assessment, placement supervisors are not directly involved in assessing students. As a result, there is no risk to the security of the award of credit and qualifications. Students are asked to comment on the suitability of placements at their conclusion.

2.88 The review team formed the view that students find their placements very helpful in bringing together theory and practice and preparing them for subsequent employment. There are many long-established partnerships with local churches and organisations, which have generally operated successfully. The team was concerned, however, that arrangements may be over-reliant on informal relationships and goodwill at the expense of systematic processes for oversight of work placements. The review team **recommends** that the College formalise and strengthen arrangements for the effective management of placements.

2.89 Arrangements are in place at the College for delivering learning opportunities with others in the context of placements. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met but the associated risk is moderate because there is a lack of formality and rigour in ensuring that placements are managed effectively, consistently and systematically.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.91 All 10 of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met; the associated level of risk is judged low in nine of them and moderate in one, with two features of good practice, three recommendations and one affirmation arising.

2.92 While there is a moderate level of risk associated with Expectation B10 on the grounds that, without action, serious problems could arise over time, the recommendation can be met swiftly by the College, by formalising and codifying arrangements for the effective management of placements. This will not require or result in major structural, operational or procedural change.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College is aware of its responsibility to provide information for different stakeholder groups that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. It is closely governed by the University, which examines and approves all publicity material. It produces a Published Information Schedule, which was first produced in response to a recommendation from the College's 2012 Review for Educational Oversight.

3.2 The College provides information to its intended audiences in a number of ways: these include the prospectus, website, blog and a magazine for the general public; information packs, open days and interviews for prospective students; the VLE and handbooks for current students; certificates and diploma supplements for students on completion of their studies; and a range of material providing information and guidance for those with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement within the College.

3.3 This approach to the management of information would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4 The review team tested the College's approach by talking to senior managers and others with key responsibilities for the oversight of information, and to members of professional support staff and others with day-to-day responsibility for the production, distribution and use of various forms of information. Conversations with students focused on how well-informed they considered themselves to be. The review team also looked at the many sources of information available to various stakeholders both in hard copy and by browsing the website.

3.5 The College website includes information about programmes, the campus and facilities, as well as a series of videos by staff and alumni that give an idea of the College's ethos and the kind of ministries in which alumni are involved. The College's status as an approved institution for training of Anglican ordinands is signalled in both the prospectus and programme specifications.

3.6 The College prospectus sets out the College's mission, its biblical focus and programmes, as well as providing further detail about particular aspects of provision, such as the emphasis placed on the integration of disciplines and the need for adaptability and faithfulness in handling scripture. The College reviews the prospectus 'approximately annually', with content commissioned by the College's Communications and Marketing Consultant and signed off by the Principal. It is also submitted to the University for review prior to publication.

3.7 Staff and students are encouraged to contribute to a blog on the College website, which offers them the opportunity to write about and discuss current topics. The College also produces a magazine, entitled Commentary, twice yearly, which includes articles on a range of different topics written by staff, students and others. While not directly about the College, Commentary serves to locate the College in terms of its theological position and

ethos. It is available to external stakeholders on the College website and is also available in print for members of the College's mailing list and for internal use by staff and students.

3.8 In addition to the website and prospectus, the College provides prospective students with enquiry packs, open mornings and interview days. Details are provided about the admissions process, with key dates and deadlines set out in a documents on the website and followed up at each stage by guidance about what is required next. Videos of former students posted on the website provide some information about graduate destinations. The College does not, however, make available statistical information about graduate destinations or student satisfaction on the grounds that the College is so well known within its constituency and that the majority of applicants will visit the College in person during the admissions process. The review team noted that the College plans to begin publishing Key Information Set data from 2018.

3.9 Students confirmed that information available to them prior to application, as well as information provided during open mornings, interview days and induction week was useful and valued. Students commented that the opportunity to meet current students at interview days and open mornings was particularly informative to them.

3.10 Information for current students includes programme specifications, curriculum maps and module descriptors, all of which are available on the VLE. Module VLE sites include learning outcomes, assessment packages, key deadlines and learning resources. From 2016 the QAE Manager will undertake termly review of module sites to ensure key information is consistent. Students are also supplied with handbooks, which are available in hard copy or on the VLE. All students must undertake a placement as part of their programme, and placement information is provided during the admissions process and followed up by meetings with the Director of Placements, placement booklets, and the VLE placement sites. Information for students regarding learning resources, such as the library and VLE, is given in the opening week, and supplemented in handbooks and on the VLE. The College sets out explicitly to students what they can expect from the College and what is expected of them.

3.11 Information for students on completion of their studies is provided in the form of a certificate produced by the University according to the templates specified in the MoC. A diploma supplement is produced that sets out all modules attempted, grades achieved, overall programme classification, and the awarding and teaching institutions involved. Diploma supplements are prepared by the Academic Registrar and verified by the University in accordance with MoC.

3.12 The College keeps records of student achievement indefinitely. Physical student files are weeded after five years and archived securely. Minutes of meetings such as Assessment Boards are also archived and digitised. The College has a bespoke database maintained by an external company, which is password-protected with restricted access. The database continues to work well but is now 10 years old; the College is therefore exploring alternative management information systems for the future.

3.13 Information for those with responsibility for academic standards and quality is provided in the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which includes a section on QAE, describing the ways in which enhancement is achieved. Student programme handbooks include a section dedicated to QAE procedures that describes the work of various boards and committees, as well as the processes and procedures for programme validation, review and closure, and external examining. Additionally, the VLE provides brief details regarding quality assurance.

3.14 The Published Information Schedule sets out who is responsible for reviewing, updating and signing-off information, which is usually those closest to the information.

For example, handbooks are reviewed and updated by the academic administration team, safeguarding policy by the College safeguarding officer and module sites by teaching staff. Printed publications are additionally reviewed by the University, in line with the MoC and the Learning Quality Enhancement Handbook. Publications and web presence are managed by the Communications and Marketing Consultant in accordance with a brief worked out in conjunction with the Principal, AVP and programme directors. The information provided in interview days and open mornings is reviewed annually, and a formal planning team for open mornings carries out regular checks to ensure it is up to date. Content of enquiry packs is reviewed annually by the admissions team. The annual student survey also offers a further check on the quality of information.

3.15 There was evidence that the College's information is generally fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The effective communication to the general public and prospective students about the ethos of the College and the nature of the vocational information it provides is **good practice**. This information is primarily communicated through the College website, brochure, programme specifications, videos of former students, the Commentary magazine and the online blog.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.17 In reaching its judgement about the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.18 The applicable Expectation in this area has been met and the associated level of risk is judged low, with one feature of good practice arising.

3.19 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 As an educational community, the College is distinguished by its size, the high sense of vocation embraced by its students and the Christian values that are shared between staff and students. One of the College's key aims is to provide the best possible training it can to equip its students for a lifelong career in Christian ministry in a rapidly changing world. Within this context the College seeks to balance a commitment to providing a consistently high quality experience that meets academic standards with a willingness to adapt and innovate where necessary. As such, the College has tried to embed quality enhancement both at a strategic level and in its day-to-day processes and procedures. This approach is articulated in the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.2 The review team tested the College's approach to the enhancement of students' learning opportunities by scrutinising relevant documentation, including the minutes of the Quality Enhancement Committee and the institutional action plan. Meetings were held with a full range of staff and students to explore their understanding of enhancement and how the College operates its approach to enhancement in practice.

4.3 Enhancement is seen as an ethical imperative that derives from the faith of College staff. Meetings with faculty and students confirmed this College-wide ethos; staff at all levels were able to communicate their understanding of the importance of enhancement and could identify different examples of this happening in operational practice in recent years. The review team found evidence of a focus on reshaping provision and improving learning resources, assessment and feedback. Faculties are well-supported in their professional development, which has recently included the reintroduction of an opportunity for study leave. Regular faculty meetings enable discussion of programme matters and can facilitate the sharing of good practice.

4.4 To formalise institutional approaches to enhancement, the College established a Quality Enhancement Committee in 2014, comprising senior staff, including the AVP and OVP; the Senior Registrar; and QAE Manager. The Committee considers intelligence from the College's monitoring cycle, including student feedback, external examiner reports and annual reviews, in order to identify areas for improvement or possible College-wide enhancement. This activity feeds into the Institutional Action Plan, which has become a sizeable document with over 80 action points identified, of which approximately 25 per cent have been completed since 2014. Activity varies from the introduction of more online reading materials at module level to strategic initiatives to review postgraduate provision. Progress against each action is systematically recorded and, while some matters may be more concerned with quality assurance than enhancement, the document clearly demonstrates the deliberate steps being taken to improve the quality of the student experience at the College.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.6 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.7 The applicable Expectation in this area has been met and the associated level of risk is judged low.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

5.1 The College sees itself as primarily training its students for ministry and therefore places great importance on student employability, as outlined in its Strategic Plan and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Programmes are intrinsically vocational and designed to ensure students acquire the relevant skills and knowledge to progress to various forms of ministry within the wider church. Practical ministry skills, cross-cultural studies and spiritual skills are all embedded in programmes. Certain modules are compulsory for Church of England ordinands and the programmes offered are mapped against Church of England requirements for students who intend to be ordained. Work-based learning forms an integral part of all programmes. Students whom the review team met were positive about the contribution made by teaching staff who are also practitioners and experts in their field.

5.2 Communications skills workshops, which have recently been made compulsory, effectively develop the skills students need to prepare for public speaking and the delivery of sermons, which is an integral part of their vocational formation. Students were enthusiastic about the benefits of completing these workshops.

5.3 Study skills provision enhances student employability by enabling them to manage the academic demands of their chosen programme. Students confirmed to the review team that they find careers advice useful; lists of vacancies are circulated and the College maintains strong relationships with a network of potential employers. Several employers whom the review team met were also former College students.

5.4 Employers, as placement providers, play an instrumental part in the development of students. They are invited into the College for a collective briefing day prior to students commencing their placements. Although they do not directly assess students on placements, these employers complete a report on students' involvement in church life and comment on their sermons. The College also seeks employers' views when discussing ideas for new programmes and subsequently involves them in validation events to ensure the appropriateness of programmes for the work environment. While employers are not formally involved in College committees, The College strengthens its links with local employers by inviting them to the College several times a year.

5.5 Employers whom the review team met confirmed that students are well-prepared for the workplace and that they have noted an improvement in the quality of preparation over the past few years. Both alumni and current students highly commend the systematic grounding placements provide in preparing for church life and the opportunity placements give them for bringing together theory and practice, which enhances their employability.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 22-25 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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