



Higher Education Review of Plumpton College

May 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Plumpton College. The review took place from 24 to 26 May 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Kevin Kendall
- Dr Fiona Tolmie
- Mr Rhys Jenkins (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Plumpton College

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

- The extensive support for research and scholarly activity that informs teaching and learning practice (Expectation B3).
- The many and varied mechanisms which engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (Expectations B5 and Enhancement).
- Effective, regular and systematic course monitoring and review processes which assure and enhance student learning opportunities (Expectations B8, A3.3 and Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By December 2016:

- clarify the availability of formal independent advice for students wishing to complain or appeal (Expectation B9)
- adopt a more strategic approach to the management and approval of work placements to ensure effective learning opportunities for students (Expectation B10)
- ensure that employers are provided with relevant information on the role of work placement in student learning (Expectations B10 and C)
- develop a strategic approach to information management that clearly articulates roles and responsibilities for ensuring information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectation C).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps being taken to ensure the suitability of library resources (Expectation B4).

Theme: Student Employability

The College's strategy is to develop provision which will enhance student employability and courses are clearly linked to areas of vocational practice. There are also many opportunities to take external professional qualifications, sometimes as part of the course and sometimes as optional extras at additional cost. The College engages with employers in a variety of ways, for example in the course approval and review processes. All programmes include work placement modules, in most cases as a compulsory element of the course, and employability skills are embedded in the curriculum through the contextualisation of assessments in some modules. The existence of semi-commercial businesses at the College also provides students with opportunities to develop relevant skill. Course teams provide support for career development and assistance with curriculum vitae (CV) writing and the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education results show that 79 per cent of those surveyed were working either full or part-time, many of them in occupations directly relevant to their courses.

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

About Plumpton College

Plumpton College (the College) was formed in 1926 and specialises in education and training across the whole range of land-based subject areas. Its mission is to engage and inspire its students through education and research at the highest levels of excellence as well as striving to create a positive local community footprint. The main campus is at Plumpton, six miles from the county town of Lewes, East Sussex, and 10 miles from the city of Brighton and Hove. Full and part-time teaching and learning in the east of the county is delivered at local out-centres and there is a centre in north Wales used primarily, but not exclusively, by outdoor education students.

In 2014-15 the College recruited around 1,800 full-time equivalent students, including 330 higher education students, and has a turnover of approximately £17 million. Higher education forms about 18 per cent by number of the overall student body and about 20 per cent of academic income. The majority of the College's higher education students are recruited from Sussex and London. The College holds a Tier 4 licence and in 2015-16 enrolled four international higher education students. The College operates all higher education provision from the Plumpton campus.

The previous review by QAA, an Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER), was carried out in 2011 and the College received overall judgements of confidence. Major changes since that review include a significant shift in the relationship with the sole degree-awarding body, the University of Brighton, and the appointment of a new Principal in October 2015 and subsequent changes to other senior roles. These include the role of Deputy Principal (Academic and Quality) becoming Vice Principal (Academic and Quality), the appointment of a new Deputy Principal (Resources and Student Services) and the retirement and replacement of the Finance Director. The higher education team is led by the Head of Higher Education and has been augmented by the appointment in January 2015 of a Higher Education Admissions Officer. The vocational management of higher education is through Course Leaders based in curriculum areas; the Head of Higher Education has regular contact with Course Leaders and chairs and/or manages the relevant committees, working groups and team meetings.

The College made a successful core and margin bid to HEFCE in 2012 and has held a direct funding contract since the 2012-13 entry. As a result, a number of key changes in the relationship with the University of Brighton have taken place as College students are no

longer also enrolled as University students. The College became a UCAS partner and began to admit students directly. It also assumed responsibility for all student support and appointed a Higher Education Student Support Officer in January 2013. Higher education students are no longer able to access the University's virtual learning environment (VLE), or its virtual and physical library resources, and the College therefore expanded library resources and the VLE to include higher education courses. These changes were phased in as the dual enrolled cohorts progressed; with the exception of very few part-time and returning intermittent students, the 2015-16 cohort is the first full student cohort to be enrolled only at the College. The College invested in a new management information system, which was implemented in summer 2013 and this has been adapted to produce suitable higher education information including examination board reports, pass lists, and student transcripts.

The 2011 Ofsted inspection graded the College as good and the 2013 Ofsted Care Standards inspection graded residential provision as outstanding, based on the excellent support and facilities available to residential students, including 28 higher education students.

While overall recruitment has not presented an issue, the key challenge is to increase recruitment to quickly achieve viable cohort sizes, especially in very niche areas, for example FdA Creative Metalworking and FdSc Equine Dentistry. Another challenge for the College is reacting to the national picture of declining numbers on other undergraduate courses for example Higher National Diplomas and Certificates and foundation degrees. For this reason, and also to offer students (including international students) further options, the College is working towards validating three-year honours degrees to sit alongside the two year foundation degree plus one year honours top-up route.

The College estate is well resourced with semi-commercial units in areas of teaching such as the winery, equine yards, dairy unit and animal care unit. Students use these resources as an integral part of their course. Investment in capital resources (including library and information technology) has exceeded £30 million over the last 10 years. However, the provision of library resources, especially the breadth of journals for higher education students, has presented a financial challenge. The College commits a per capita spend on library resources which is greater than that committed by the University, but the economies of scale limit the number of electronic journals that can be secured. The e-journal provision has undergone a wide-ranging review and the focus on procurement of e-books is being prioritised.

The College works with one awarding body, the University of Brighton, which validates all higher education courses at the College. There is a very productive working relationship between the College and the University. A Partner College and Periodic Review took place in April 2015 which resulted in the University approving the renewal of the courses at Plumpton College for a further five years and the review panel confirming on behalf of the University that it was satisfied that the College was able to deliver and manage its responsibilities in respect of partnership working.

The previous QAA review in 2011 made two advisable and three desirable recommendations. While the College submitted an IQER Summative Review action plan, not all recommendations have been fully actioned. For example, there was an advisable recommendation to take further steps to ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of library resources and availability of electronic journals, and, as noted above and as commented on by students in this review, this still presents a challenge for the College. In addition, the advisable recommendation to make available appropriate information and documentation for all workplace learning activities has not been fully implemented and employers the review

team met noted that there is still a lack information regarding the role of work placement in student learning. This review team makes recommendations to address these two areas.

The desirable recommendations which included the continued identification, sharing and implementation of good practice, recording and demonstrating information about professional membership and updating, and ensuring that feedback consistently helps students to improve, have been addressed. Good practice identified in the previous review has been built on and this included the mutually supportive relationship between the College and the University, the close integration of academic, vocational and practical teaching and learning, and the comprehensive approach to research and scholarly activity. The latter has been identified as continuing good practice in this review.

Explanation of the findings about Plumpton 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College works with a sole awarding body, the University of Brighton (the University), in relation to its higher education provision. The University sets the standards which the College is responsible for implementing. It also ensures through its course development process that the qualifications meet the requirements of the FHEQ, align with the national credit framework and take account of qualification characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements. The development process includes scrutiny at the University Academic Standards Committee Further Education College Subcommittee (ASC FEC SC) and Portfolio Planning Group (PPG). The College Higher Education Academic Procedures and Quality Manual (the Higher Education Quality Manual) describes the alignment of College processes with University regulations.

1.2 The College completes a University-set template for initial course development which is considered by the Plumpton Board of Study before being scrutinised by the University PPG. Course development teams are required to take account of the relevant qualification descriptors for example Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmarks, master's degree characteristics and the Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer Level Descriptors. The University validation pack contains a section on engagement with Subject Benchmark Statements, which course teams complete and a full programme specification is produced, which clearly states the level at which the

course is set. There is further scrutiny of the levels and learning outcomes by the University during the validation process.

1.3 The University module specification template used by the College clearly identifies the FHEQ level. New or proposed changes to modules must also be accompanied by the University new and changed module form. The new or changed modules are internally approved by the Plumpton Board of Study and then approved by the University ASC FEC SC.

1.4 These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team scrutinised a range of documents including validation paperwork, programme specification and module templates and minutes of relevant committee meetings relating to the setting and maintenance of standards. It also met senior and teaching staff to explore the College's use and understanding of the reference points in the design and approval of programmes to meet appropriate academic standards.

1.6 Validation processes take account of relevant external reference points and are based on University systems and documentation. The review team heard, for example, about the frameworks of reference used by the course team that developed the MSc Viticulture and Oenology. External examiner reports confirm that validated programmes continue to align with the relevant qualification descriptor and to meet the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement. College staff are aware, and make effective use, of the FHEQ.

1.7 The review team concludes that higher education programmes delivered by the College take account of guidance on qualification characteristics and Subject Benchmark Statements and align with guidance on qualification characteristics. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of associated 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 College is not a degree-awarding body and works within the University General Examination and Assessment Regulations 2015-16 (GEAR) framework established by the University to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications. The College Head of Higher Education attends appropriate committees at the University and there are clear lines of communication between the University and College academic governance structures.

1.9 The Plumpton Board of Study (also referred to as the HE Board), chaired by the Vice Principal, is the higher education quality assurance body for the College and individual Course Boards report to this committee.

1.10 The College sets out its higher education academic framework in its Higher Education Quality Manual, which is updated annually and which aligns with the University's regulations and processes. The College's calendar of higher education events and course management tasks sets out the key higher education events and deadlines within the College.

1.11 The approach of the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team scrutinised a range of College and University documentation, including the College Higher Education Quality Manual and the terms of reference and minutes of the Plumpton HE Board to test this Expectation. The review team also met senior and teaching staff and students and reviewed the information about regulations on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.13 College staff are aware of GEAR and a copy is on the staff shared drive for them to access. Students are made aware of GEAR by their tutors, GEAR is referred to in the Higher Education Student Handbook and a copy of GEAR is on the higher education page on Plumpton Online (PoL), the College VLE.

1.14 Staff and students whom the review team met confirmed the College's use and understanding of the academic frameworks and regulations governing the award of academic credit and qualifications. Clear minutes are kept of the meetings of the Plumpton Board of Study and the Course Boards, which enable the College to have oversight of the alignment of the work of these committees with the academic framework.

1.15 The College has clear and transparent academic frameworks which govern the alignment of its higher education provision appropriately with the academic standards set by the University and by the Plumpton Board of Study. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16 The College keeps a definitive record of each programme through the programme specifications, which are available on the website. These are approved at validation and annually reviewed at the Plumpton Board of Study, which agrees changes to them. The University ASC FEC SC then approves the changes.

1.17 Programme specifications and module specifications are produced on a University template which requires standard details such as FHEQ level and the credit value.

1.18 Changes to individual modules are also agreed at the Plumpton Board of Study and then approved at the University ASC FEC SC.

1.19 The definitive list of programme and module specifications is held in the staff shared drive which only those authorised can edit, but all staff can view.

1.20 The processes described would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.21 The review team scrutinised minutes of meetings, the organisational chart, and the programme and module specifications, as well as discussing the systems and processes with College and University staff.

1.22 The evidence demonstrates that processes for the development and maintenance of definitive records of programmes are working and used effectively. The College uses University templates and examples seen include the MSc Validation Pack for Viticulture and Oenology and the module specification for Batch Production. The use of University templates ensures that FHEQ levels and credit values are consistently used and adhered to across the College to assure standards.

1.23 Review, amendment, and agreement of programme and module specifications at the Plumpton Board of Study and the approval at the University ASC FEC SC ensures that the College and the University are aware of changes. It also ensures that both modules and programmes continue at the correct levels and standards. The resulting definitive specifications are held in the staff shared drive and staff confirmed that they knew where and how to access them.

1.24 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.25 The Memorandum of Cooperation with the University states that the validating authority for programmes is the University and that the Academic Board of the University has ultimate control of the programmes and the awards, and responsibility for the academic standards of the awards.

1.26 All the College's degree programmes are designed by the College, in conjunction with the University, and validated through the University's processes to ensure they meet UK threshold standards and the University's own academic frameworks and regulations. The assessment of learning outcomes is specifically referred to GEAR, Section J.

1.27 The University has procedures for programme approval and templates as described in A1 and A2.2 above. Programme specifications and module specifications are presented to the University Validation Panel on its own standard template.

1.28 Modifications to programmes are approved internally by the Plumpton Board of Study and then formally approved the University ASC FEC SC.

1.29 The procedural frameworks within which the College operates would allow Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.30 The review team scrutinised the University regulations, documentation and standard templates used by the College and spoke to the Principal, senior and academic staff, and representatives from the University about their implementation.

1.31 The College complies with the University procedures in delivering awards approved through the University frameworks and regulations. University documentation and templates are used throughout the process and standard validation approval forms are signed by the Chair of the validation panel. The programme and module specification templates clearly state programme aims, learning outcomes and methods of assessment thus ensuring that academic standards are met and academic frameworks and regulations complied with.

1.32 The review team considers that the College operates effectively within the frameworks for programme approval of the University and therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.33 Responsibility for the setting and maintenance of academic standards for programmes delivered by the College lies with the University. The College adheres to the requirements of the University GEAR, Section J, which is available to College staff on the intranet.

1.34 Examination boards operate under University regulations (GEAR) and are chaired by a senior university academic and attended by external examiners. The constitution of the examination boards is documented by the University; College membership is approved at the Plumpton Board of Study in October and the University ASC FEC SC in January the following year.

1.35 The College management information system (MIS) records student achievement and produces examination board reports, pass lists and transcripts. These documents enable student grades to be viewed electronically at Area Examination Boards by Course Leaders, external examiners and the Chair of the Examination Board.

1.36 The internal verification system is outlined in the Higher Education Quality Manual and the process uses standard forms operationally.

1.37 External examiners attend the examination boards and report, both at the boards themselves and within their written reports, that the students meet the required levels and that the boards are conducted appropriately. The external examiner report template contains specific sections on the academic standards set for and achieved by students.

1.38 The processes and procedures followed by the College in line with University requirements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.39 To test the Expectation, the review team met members of senior staff, academic staff, students and representatives from the University, and considered documentary evidence including the University regulations, the Higher Education Quality Manual, external examiner reports and AEB and Plumpton Board of Study minutes.

1.40 Module learning outcomes are mapped to programme learning outcomes and assessments are linked to the module outcomes. Internal verification of assessments is robust, which ensures that students are correctly credited with the appropriate outcomes.

1.41 Course Leaders input grades directly on to the College MIS which is used to print reports for the AEBs. External examiners attend the AEBs and report that they are conducted appropriately and that academic standards are met. External examiner reports also confirm that assessments are appropriate and academic standards have been met.

1.42 In the delivery of its higher education programmes, the College adheres to its own quality processes and those of the University; this ensures that the achievement of the relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment and academic standards have been satisfied. 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

1.43 The College's programme annual monitoring and review processes follow the University's guidance for partner institutions, the main document being the Academic Health Report (AHR), to be replaced this academic year by the Course Monitoring Report. The Institutional AHR is approved internally at the Plumpton Board of Study in October and then presented to the University ASC FEC SC. The AHR is also received by the College's governing body annually in February.

1.44 The course-level AHRs are presented at the University ASC FEC SC land-based subject group which meets in the autumn.

1.45 The University Partner College and Periodic Review process takes place every five years. This is supplemented by a College internal periodic review of the curriculum which was instituted in 2014 and which is intended to take place every four years. The internal review includes input from an industry expert and a student representative and follows a standard self-evaluation template and agenda. The minutes of external and internal periodic reviews are received by the Plumpton Board of Study and an action plan detailing actions against the recommendations and requirements is presented and approved at the same Board.

1.46 Alignment with the requirements of the University would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.47 The review team examined the effectiveness of the processes by reading policy and operational documents, examining minutes of committee meetings and conducting meetings with senior staff, academic staff and representatives from the University.

1.48 The most recent Partner College and Periodic Review in April 2015 confirmed the fitness for purpose of the partnership arrangement and that College annual monitoring and review processes are effective. These processes go beyond the requirements of the University. For example, the College has introduced mid-year reviews which are used to monitor progress against the course action plan and report on current trends, such as retention. This contributes to the good practice in Expectation B8.

1.49 The make-up of internal periodic course review panels (as discussed above) results in actions that enhance the student experience. So far, wine business, forestry/arboriculture, equine and agriculture courses have been internally reviewed.

1.50 The College engages effectively with the requirements of the University regarding the monitoring and review of programmes, and strengthens this with its own processes. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.51 The University, which is responsible for setting and maintaining academic standards, provides the involvement of external and independent expertise in the setting and delivery of standards. Validation panels and the University five-yearly Partner College and Periodic Review process include an independent external panel member.

1.52 The University appoints external examiners who are asked to confirm whether students receive appropriate teaching and assessment to allow them to meet the required standards at each level. External examiners complete a standard report template, which has been mapped against the Quality Code.

1.53 The recently introduced internal periodic review process includes external specialists (see Expectations A3.3 and B8 for further detail). A Curriculum Advisory Panel is active within the College for the wine courses, but there is no recent evidence of meetings of advisory panels for other curriculum areas.

1.54 The College involves professional, regulatory and statutory bodies (PSRBs) where appropriate. The FdSc Equine Dentistry course was developed with the British Association of Equine Dental Technicians (BAEDT) and British Equestrian Veterinary Association (BEVA). The FdSc Veterinary Nursing course is validated by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Where there is PSRB involvement the external examiner is asked to confirm that the PSRB/occupational standards are met.

1.55 The design would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.56 The review team tested the Expectation through reading a range of documentary evidence, including validation and review minutes and external examiner reports, and through discussion with University and College staff and employers.

1.57 There is appropriate use of external academic and practice expertise during curriculum design and periodic review. However, the review team noted that the continuous use of practice expertise during the life of a course through consultation with Curriculum Advisory Panels is less prevalent than at the time of the 2011 IQER.

1.58 External examiner reports confirm that courses are appropriately matched to the FHEQ and, where appropriate, to the requirements of PSRB or occupational standards. In examination boards, external examiners report that they are satisfied with the level and standard of student work.

1.59 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.61 All Expectations in Part A are met and all have an associated low level of risk. The review team makes no recommendations or affirmations, and there is no specific good practice identified although this is a link in Expectation A3.3 to the good practice in course monitoring and review identified in Expectation B8.

1.62 The College works closely with its sole awarding body, the University of Brighton, and adheres to its academic frameworks and regulations in the maintenance of academic standards. Its higher education programmes are bespoke and designed and developed by the College using University systems, processes, templates and documentation. The University undertook a five-yearly Partner College and Periodic Review in 2015 in which it confirmed it was satisfied that the College was able to deliver and manage its responsibilities in respect of partnership working and commended the good systems and understanding of the processes that support this.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The Higher Education Strategy 2015-20, which complements the College's Strategic Plan, outlines the key priorities for higher education at the College which includes growth, meeting employer and student needs, encouraging progression from level 3 and enhancing the reputation of the College as a leading provider of land-based education in the South East.

2.2 Potential new programmes are identified using local market intelligence data, alignment with local enterprise partnership priorities, employer engagement, staff expertise, and available resources. Curriculum areas develop a proposal for consideration by the senior management team (SMT) and discussion at the University PPG. The new course development document and part one of the programme specification is presented for approval to the Plumpton Board of Study. Following this the documents go to PPG for approval.

2.3 Programme and module specifications are presented to the University Validation Panel on standard University templates which are available on the University staff VLE. The University provides a validation pack with guidance on the requirements for validation. Some programmes may have dual validation through a PSRB, for example the FdSc Veterinary Nursing, which is also validated by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). Ongoing module changes are approved at the Plumpton Board of Study and the University ASC FEC SC following input from students through Course Boards and student questionnaires.

2.4 These processes are described in the Higher Education Quality Manual and the higher education calendar.

2.5 The programme development and approval procedural frameworks would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.6 The review team examined a range of evidence including strategy and procedural documents and minutes of committee meetings, and discussed the approach to developing higher education provision and approving courses for delivery with College senior management, University and academic staff, and students.

2.7 The College has strategic oversight of new programme developments through the Plumpton Board of Study, which comprises Course Leaders, the Vice Principal and the Head of Higher Education. The Board of Study reports to the governing body and SMT. The process is effective and has resulted in the development of a number of programmes which have been successfully approved by the University and have subsequently recruited, for example the FdSc Equine Dentistry, the FdA Creative Metalworking and the MSc Viticulture and Oenology.

2.8 Governors and senior managers set target dates for course development and recruitment at strategic planning meetings, which ensures effective oversight of the process.

2.9 External input is provided by external examiners and an external member on the validation panel, and consultation with industry takes place through Curriculum Advisory Panels. With the exception of the Wine Curriculum Advisory Panel, many of these have not met for some time. Students have effective input to the process through Course Boards and student questionnaires.

2.10 The College's processes align with those of the University which has ultimate responsibility for programme approval. College staff have a good understanding of University processes and have developed their own documentation to explain these in a College context. The College has its own rigorous processes in place for the design, development and approval of programmes, with external input. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.11 The College is responsible for the selection, admission and enrolment of students as stated in the Memorandum of Cooperation and has a Student Admissions Policy and Procedure. This has been approved by SMT and the governing body and is available on the shared staff drive and the website, and is supported by an HE Admissions Handbook.

2.12 Entry criteria are in the 2016-17 Prospectus, on the College website and on UCAS. The Prospectus is also available on the website as are all higher education programme specifications.

2.13 On receipt of a UCAS application the HE Admissions Officer responds to the applicant and sends a copy of the Course Handbook, programme specification, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and bursary and accommodation information. Course Leaders are responsible for the selection of applicants, and the HE Admissions Officer makes offers through UCAS. A spreadsheet is kept by the HE Admissions Officer to monitor application timescales. Where more information is required to reach a decision, more evidence may be adduced or interviews requested.

2.14 The College attends external recruitment events and invites all enquirers to an information event and open day. Applicants are also invited to meet the Course Leader for an informal discussion or interview.

2.15 Those who wish to make an appeal against an admissions decision do so through the College's Complaints Policy and Procedure. The College has recently joined the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) scheme and has subsequently revised the Complaints Policy and Procedure. This document was approved by the Plumpton Board of Study and reported to the University.

2.16 The policies and procedures described would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.17 The review team tested the implementation of recruitment, selection and admissions processes by scrutinising the admissions policies and procedures and associated documentation, and by meeting staff and students to discuss the processes and their experience of them.

2.18 The Student Admissions Policy and Procedure is mapped against *Chapter B2* of the Quality Code. Strategic oversight by SMT and the governing body ensures that the policy is aligned with College priorities. The HE Admissions Officer provides a point of contact for applicants throughout the admissions process, ensuring admissions are conducted in a professional manner.

2.19 Some students enter their course through non-standard applications. The approach taken by programmes varies and may include a subject-specific essay, interview or portfolio. The tailored approach in different curriculum areas enables non-standard entrants to access the appropriate courses and levels. This allows for an inclusive admissions process.

2.20 Admissions appeals and complaints are dealt with under the College's Complaints Policy and Procedure and comply with OIA requirements. The effectiveness of this element of the procedure is yet to be tested by the College as there have been no recent appeals against admissions decisions. If appropriate, students who fail to meet the admissions criteria for their chosen course are encouraged to enter a course at a lower level which should enable them to access the course they originally applied for at a later date.

2.21 Students reported variable information on course content and structure before enrolment. The College has addressed these concerns by providing comprehensive course-related information and offering the opportunity to meet Course Leaders throughout the admissions process to discuss applications or the course itself.

2.22 Over the last academic year, the College has instigated a number of initiatives to improve internal progression. For example, further education students are invited to attend course information events and a presentation outlining higher education opportunities at the College has been produced. Staff commented that they believe these initiatives have been successful and that the College plans to hold similar events for students in local schools.

2.23 Overall, the review team concludes that the processes for recruitment, selection, and admission of students are transparent, reliable, valid, and inclusive. Therefore 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

2.24 The College's strategic approach to learning and teaching is contained in its Higher Education Strategy. The College's generic Teaching and Learning Policy now includes a section on higher education staff development and scholarly activity. The Head of Higher Education holds regular meetings with course leaders to ensure a shared understanding of the strategic direction and of policies and procedures.

2.25 The College is subject to the University policy on staffing and University and College policy require new staff either to have a teaching qualification or to obtain one in a timely fashion. New staff are provided with mentors and are supported by their Head of Department. The higher education staff CV pro forma indicates staff qualifications, relevant industrial experience and research interests to assist in allocating staff appropriately to modules.

2.26 A specialist Learning and Teaching Team coordinate and support pedagogy development across the College and support all aspects of the teaching and learning practice, including higher education. Staff are observed formally and engage in peer observation.

2.27 The College has oversight of staff development activities through appraisals and the staff development budgeting process. Staff are encouraged to undertake higher level qualifications to develop their scholarship and academic skills and a fee waiver is available for postgraduate programmes at the University.

2.28 Investment in research project development underpins research-informed teaching at the College. Higher education staff receive time for scholarly activity through a reduction in their teaching load and further staff time is made available through a bidding process for research projects.

2.29 The College takes steps to ensure students are aware of their responsibilities for their own independent learning in the Higher Education student handbook and students sign a learning agreement at the start of each year.

2.30 The design would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.31 The review team tested the effectiveness of the design by considering documentary evidence, including strategic and course documentation, and by discussing with staff and students their experience of learning and teaching at the College.

2.32 The main part of the Teaching and Learning Policy is overdue for review and this is planned for autumn 2016. The review team was provided with the final draft of a new policy on the valuation of teaching, learning and assessment. The National Student Survey (NSS) scores for teaching have recently been above average for the sector although there was considerable variance among the programme areas which reached publishable response rates. Staff acknowledged the variability in quality of teaching, including use of the VLE,

and this variability was confirmed by the students whom the review team met. Students were clear that there is progression in the amount of independent study and the degree of challenge as they move through their courses.

2.33 There has been the considerable focus on learning and teaching improvement and on the development of reflective practice since the recent appointment of the new Principal. The College uses formal observations, peer observations and learning walks to monitor the quality of teaching. Higher education observations are differentiated from those used for further education and do not use Ofsted grading criteria. Staff performance is also monitored by feedback from students at Course Boards. Sharing of good practice is facilitated through the Higher Education Review Day.

2.34 The Learning and Teaching Team has been expanded to include Development Coaches with a focus on leading pedagogic continual professional development. There is a College expectation that new staff will complete teaching qualifications in timely fashion and around eighty per cent of higher education staff currently have a teaching qualification.

2.35 The review team heard from senior staff about the process of allocating resources to support research and scholarly activity and were given examples by senior and teaching staff of research projects undertaken by staff. Staff are supported to undertake research-based postgraduate degrees and doctorates. The College seeks to develop its higher education students as active researchers through a curriculum which includes research methods and by encouraging students to undertake empirical as well as desk-based research. Employers confirmed that empirical research is often connected with work placement, which they appreciate. The extensive support for research and scholarly activity that informs teaching and learning practice is **good practice**.

2.36 The review team concludes that the College has effective processes to articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. 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

2.37 The strategic approach of the College, set out in its Higher Education Strategy and reinforced by the Principal in briefings to the staff is to retain students and develop them to 'be the best they can be'.

2.38 The College has invested in both specialist land-based resources and more generic learning resources. Staff are required to use the VLE to promote learning opportunities. This is audited against a common baseline for staff compliance in the Higher Education Quality Manual, which states the minimum VLE information which must be published by module leaders.

2.39 The induction process is the responsibility of Course Leaders who use a standard Induction Checklist and Induction Timetable. Each student has timetabled tutorials to support pastoral and academic development and the College complies with the University Policy on Tutoring. The HE Student Support Officer provides further assistance with both study skills and pastoral support, including Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) support.

2.40 College responsibility for student support has increased with the change in the relationship with the University. A Student Services Manager has been appointed to act as a 'super tutor' and advise staff on matters of pastoral support.

2.41 The design would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.42 The review team tested the effectiveness of the design through considering a range of evidence including strategy and policy documents, the Partner College and Periodic Review report and NSS results, and through meetings with staff, employers and students.

2.43 The University's Partner College and Periodic Review 2015 report noted that specialist facilities are a strength of the provision and students spoke favourably of these facilities. The College has recently expanded the information technology provision in response to adverse student comment in the NSS.

2.44 The College acknowledges that the library presents a financial challenge. It has put in place a working party led by the Vice-Principal to address the issue and has altered the management of the library to allow for a more strategic approach to the use of resources. Students continue to comment unfavourably on the library facilities but acknowledge that there has been improvement and that the College is still working on the issue. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to ensure the suitability of library resources.

2.45 There are some examples of good use of the VLE and staff and students acknowledge the desirability of spreading the good practice more widely.

2.46 Students are provided with transition support through initial group tutorials which cover academic writing, referencing and research skills, and students confirmed that the tutorials are generally found to be helpful. The College is piloting extended transition support to pre-entry with taster days (see section B2, paragraph 2.12, for further details).

2.47 The Partner College and Periodic Review report noted that students were comfortable seeking support from the HE Student Support Officer. The College has an open

door policy; students whom the review team met felt supported by the College and confirmed that staff support is available at all times.

2.48 As previously mentioned, student support services have recently transferred from the University to the College; staff met by the team felt that this has enabled closer working relationships between College staff and students to the benefit of students. In response to student feedback and a recommendation of the Partner College and Periodic Review, counselling services have been reinstated at the College.

2.49 Students and employers spoke favourably of the measures in place to improve student employability. Careers advice is provided by course teams. Some courses use the Career Development module as a structured way of getting students to engage in career planning. There is a range of additional vocational qualifications available to students which enable them to enhance their employability.

2.50 The review team concludes that the College has in place arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential and therefore 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

2.51 The College has an HE Learner Engagement Policy which guides its student engagement processes. The HE Student Handbook also contains details of the role of student representatives and the quality assurance and student voice processes.

2.52 Each course has an elected representative who attends Course Boards which have a set agenda, including review of AHRs, external examiner reports and student survey data. Cross-College Course Boards are held three times a year where all course representatives are invited to discuss College-wide issues.

2.53 Students are also represented on the Plumpton Board of Study. There is a higher education student representative on the governing body and the higher education student governor attends other committees in that role.

2.54 Students undertake other internal surveys including those using NSS questions through the VLE, and these are analysed at College and at course level. Students can also feed back directly to the Head of Higher Education or the HE Administrator through an email link on the VLE.

2.55 The policy and the structures in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.56 The review team scrutinised the minutes of the Course Board and Board of Study meetings and other relevant documents. They also met students, course representatives and staff to discuss the effectiveness of the system.

2.57 Students generally feel they are listened to, that the College makes changes where necessary, and that course representatives are effective. The student submission stated that 'there are clear channels through which students can make their views and opinions known'.

2.58 There are many examples of student feedback resulting in change. For example at the Cross-College Course Boards student representatives discussed what they would like in their new facilities and the leadership of the College listened and provided them with, for example, a water cooler in the Higher Education Common Room. At Course Board level Outdoor Adventurous Activities students suggested that income from activities for which they earn money be diverted into a budget to help towards the cost of trips and this was later approved. Counselling services were reinstated after a request from students at the Plumpton Board of Study, and a recommendation at the Partner College and Periodic Review. The student voice is heard and student engagement systems are effective.

2.59 Changes resulting from student input are disseminated effectively in the minutes of Course Board meetings which show actions taken since the previous meeting; these minutes are published on the VLE. In some cases the College creates 'you said, we did' posters.

2.60 Students are involved as partners in decision making at various levels across the College. Student representatives consider external examiner reports, the course AHR, internal survey results and NSS outcomes at Course Boards and students can discuss any issues and raise their concerns. The many and varied mechanisms which engage

students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience are **good practice**.

2.61 Student representative training was previously undertaken by the University of Brighton Students' Union (UBSU). However, with the changing relationship with the University, the College has now taken over this role. Although training was not provided during this academic year students whom the review team met felt well equipped to be effective in their roles and reported several examples of actions taken based on their feedback. Nevertheless, the review team welcomes College plans to reintroduce student representative training in the coming academic year.

2.62 Monitoring the effectiveness of student engagement is largely informal, although the course and institutional AHRs include a section on student evaluation, which provides a formal monitoring mechanism. The Principal is meeting with USBU with a view to setting up a College Students' Union and if this takes place the President of the College Students' Union would be involved in monitoring the effectiveness of student engagement. The HE Learner Engagement Policy will be reviewed in the usual cycle of policy reviews.

2.63 The policy and processes for student engagement are clear and staff and students understand the systems and use them effectively. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated 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

2.64 The College conducts all assessments and recognition of prior learning (RPL) in line with the requirements of the University. The University regulations (GEAR, Section J) contains details governing assessment processes and are available to students on the VLE and to staff on the shared drive. GEAR regulations are also referred to in the assessment section of the HE Student Handbook. University grading criteria are in the Course Handbook and these are mapped to the HE Assessment Feedback Sheet.

2.65 Assessment types for each module are approved by the Plumpton Board of Study and at validation. Course Leaders prepare assessment schedules for each programme for each semester, which contains launch, submission and feedback dates. The assessment brief details the learning objectives as well as hand-in and feedback dates.

2.66 The University has guidelines on the moderation of summative assessments which the College uses to inform its processes. The Head of Higher Education plans the internal verification of assessments schedule at the start of each year which includes internal verification of assessment briefs and assessment feedback.

2.67 Examinations are conducted in accordance with University regulations and there is also a College examination procedure displayed in examination rooms.

2.68 Some modules are assessed online through the VLE which is password protected for assessment security reasons.

2.69 The University policy on RPL is implemented by the College and is available to students on the VLE along with the RPL form. Course Leaders also refer applicants to the RPL Policy.

2.70 University regulations (GEAR, Section F) are followed with respect to academic misconduct which involves the Module Leader, the Head of Higher Education and the University Partnership Office. Standard forms, returns and reports are used for this purpose. The HE Student Handbook explains the concept of academic misconduct and the potential outcomes and the concept is discussed with students at induction.

2.71 The University regulations (GEAR, Section E) is followed for examination boards. There are two types of board, Area Examination Boards which approve module grades, and Course Examination Boards. College membership of examination boards is approved by the Plumpton Board of Study and the University ASC FEC SC. External examiners also attend examination boards. Assessment decisions are recorded and individual transcripts sent to students.

2.72 The HE Student Support Officer works with Course Leaders and individual students who have particular needs to complete a Learner Support Plan.

2.73 The procedures outlined above relating to assessment and RPL processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.74 To test the Expectation, the review team met College senior and academic staff, students and University representatives, and examined documentary evidence, for example, University regulations and College procedures relating to assessment.

2.75 College staff and students have a clear understanding of the assessment process based on University regulations. College procedures and documents, for example the Higher Education Quality Manual, are provided by the College which explain these clearly.

2.76 There is a robust system of assessment approval through the Plumpton Board of Study and the University Validation Panel which ensures that assessment is appropriate and addresses the relevant learning outcomes. The College follows the University guidelines on moderation. External examiners are used effectively in the approval of assessment briefs and the scrutiny of a sample of marked work; their reports confirm that assessments are appropriate and threshold academic standards are met. They also state that academic standards are appropriate, and that the standard of assessment is very good, varied and relevant to industry.

2.77 An assessment schedule is provided for students and this is mapped to the learning outcomes. Students confirmed that this process is effective and that a procedure for late submission of assessments is in place.

2.78 The Head of Higher Education manages the internal verification process and ensures that both assessment briefs and marked work are appropriate for the relevant learning outcomes.

2.79 If appropriate, assessments are submitted through plagiarism-detection software and some grades and feedback given online. Course Leaders submit their grades directly to the College MIS for use in the AEBs.

2.80 University grading criteria are available to students in course handbooks and are mapped to the tasks on the assessment feedback sheets. A desirable IQER recommendation was to ensure that feedback consistently helps students to improve their future work; students confirmed that feedback is useful and tutors are accessible for discussions, but in some cases this is still variable.

2.81 AEBs are chaired by a senior member of the University and ensure that students are awarded credit for achievement they have gained. The College uses the University's RPL procedure appropriately and this is reported to the examination boards.

2.82 The Plumpton Board of Study receives a summary anonymised report on academic misconduct from the University. For the academic year 2014-15 the number of incidents of academic misconduct were relatively low and 'minor' in nature.

2.83 Through adherence to the requirements of the University and through their own procedures, the College ensures that the assessment process is equitable, reliable and valid. The review team therefore confirms that the Expectation is met and that the level of associated 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

2.84 The University appoints external examiners after the College has nominated a suitable person using the University External Examiner Nomination Form. The nomination is scrutinised at the Plumpton Board of Study before being discussed at the University ASC FEC SC and then approved at the University Subcommittee for External Examiner Nominations. External examiners are appointed for a term of four years and cannot be reappointed. The University has the responsibility for external examiner training.

2.85 The College's Higher Education Quality Manual sets out the College procedures for using external examiners. These procedures align with those of the University.

2.86 The College approach would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.87 The review team considered a range of documents including those relating to the appointment of external examiners, minutes of examination boards, external examiner reports, course monitoring reports and minutes of HE Board meetings, and met staff and students.

2.88 External examiners approve assessments before they are issued to students. They liaise with Course Leaders in relation to scrutiny of a sample of student work. They are members of examination boards, at which they give verbal reports which are minuted. The College sends the external examiners the Course Board minutes so that they are aware of any student feedback raised during the meeting, or in the summary of student survey responses. The College ensures that the external examiners' name and institution is published in course handbooks and programme specifications.

2.89 External examiner reports are received by the University and then sent to the Head of Higher Education who disseminates them to the Course Leader, Head of Department, Vice Principal and relevant module leaders. The reports are saved on the shared drive and are available to all staff. Good practice identified in external examiner reports is collated and referred to in the Institutional AHR. They are made available to students through the VLE although most of the students whom the review team met were unaware of this. The student representative on the Plumpton Board of Study also receives the external examiner comment and actions compilation in the October Board of Study.

2.90 The College considers comments and recommendations contained within external examiners' reports at a day of meetings between the Vice Principal, Head of Higher Education and each Course Leader. The resultant actions are contained in a summary document, which is received by the Plumpton Board of Study. External examiners' comments are also referred to and actions included in course level AHRs, which, as explained in Expectation B8, are shared with students.

2.91 The College makes scrupulous use of external examiners and the review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.92 The College's annual programme monitoring and review processes follow the University's guidance for partner institutions, the main document being AHRs which are produced using a University template. An institutional AHR is compiled by the Head of Higher Education, approved at the Plumpton Board of Study in October, and then presented to the University ASC FEC SC and the governing body the following February. Details of the academic health process are in the Higher Education Quality Manual.

2.93 The course-level AHRs are discussed at the University Land-based and Animal Science Subject Group which meets in the autumn and is attended by Course Leaders. Any issues for action or good practice to be shared are taken forward by the relevant staff following this meeting, for example a working group was set up to review the journals available to students. The results of the NSS and internal student satisfaction surveys are used as part of the review process and the AHRs are shared with student representatives at the semester one Course Board. The reports are also available to students on the relevant course area of the VLE.

2.94 The University undertakes a Partner College and Periodic Review every five years. The College has commenced an internal periodic course review process which will take place every four years. All these processes are described in the Higher Education Quality Manual and referred to in the higher education calendar.

2.95 A new mid-year course review has taken place this year where Course Leaders report progress on the AHR action plan to the Principal, Vice Principal and Head of Higher Education. This is reported using a standard recording method and includes a review of the current position with regard to retention and applications.

2.96 The programme monitoring and review processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.97 The review team examined these processes by scrutinising documents including course and institutional-level AHRs and minutes of relevant College and University committee meetings, and discussed the processes with senior staff, support staff, academic staff and students.

2.98 College annual monitoring and review processes are robust and follow the University regulations and guidance, and are outlined in the College Higher Education Quality Manual. Institutional and course-level AHRs are discussed through the College committee structure and students are involved in these discussions by their involvement in Course Boards.

2.99 The Higher Education Quality Cycle with flowchart is a useful guide for staff and helps ensure that actions are carried out and good practice is shared through the quality cycle process.

2.100 The College has introduced mid-year reviews to provide further oversight and to ensure that actions arising from course reviews are monitored and to consider retention and recruitment data.

2.101 The College undergoes the University periodic review process and has piloted its own internal periodic review which will take place on a rolling cycle. The internal review panel includes a student representative and a vocational expert and follows a standard self-evaluation template and agenda. An action plan is produced which is taken to the Plumpton Board of Study. The University identified this initiative as good practice and has expressed an interest in using this as part of their own review processes.

2.102 The Plumpton Board of Study is a key committee in the College higher education quality cycle. It supports effective, regular and systematic course monitoring and review processes, which is **good practice** and which assure and enhance student learning opportunities.

2.103 The College has developed its own quality processes which meet and enhance the requirements of the University. There are robust and systematic quality assurance processes which ensure the effective monitoring and review of programmes. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.104 Academic appeals are governed by the University processes detailed in GEAR, Section H. There are two templates available on the VLE for students to complete should they wish to make a formal appeal.

2.105 The College Complaints Policy and Procedure has been revised in 2016 following joining the OIA. The Plumpton Board of Study approved the revised policy and reported it to the University ASC FEC SC. The policy is available to staff on the shared drive and to students on the VLE and the website; it is also referenced in the Higher Education student handbook.

2.106 The University procedures are available on their website from which relevant forms can be downloaded. Staff have also information about the appeals process in the Higher Education Quality Manual.

2.107 The HE student handbook contains information on the appeals and complaints procedures. The Principal's Personal Assistant collates the number and type of complaints, and information on complaints and appeals is noted in the Principal's Annual Report to the Corporation.

2.108 The processes and policy would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.109 The review team analysed the documentation referred to in the Complaints Policy and Procedure, GEAR, Section H, the individual forms for complaints, and met staff and students to discuss their experience and understanding of the system.

2.110 The College provides a clear policy and sets of procedures for appeals and complaints which are written in layman's terms to increase the accessibility of the document. Both procedures allow for early and informal resolution, in case of appeals through a results meeting with a member of staff and for complaints through the first informal stage of the procedure. The policies are accessible and widely available to students and staff on the College and University websites, the VLE, and in relevant handbooks. Staff and students whom the review team met were aware of where to find these, or who to speak to if they were unsure.

2.111 The Higher Education Team, which comprises the Head of Higher Education, the HE Student Support Officer, the HE Admissions Officer and two HE Administrators, supports the students with respect to complaints. The Quality Assurance Officer can provide further support if a student requires assistance from a member of staff not involved in higher education. GEAR, Section H, paragraph 1.7 recommends that students should, in most cases, seek support from UBSU regarding academic appeals; however, this is not currently available to College students. Furthermore, on the formal appeal form students are 'strongly advised to seek independent advice on completion of their appeal form before submitting it'. While College students can seek informal advice from their Course Leader, the Head of Higher Education and an HE Administrator, and senior College staff believe that students may still have access to formal advice from UBSU, the review team **recommends** that the

College clarify the availability of formal independent advice for students wishing to complain or appeal.

2.112 The review team concludes that the procedures are fair, timely, and enable enhancement. To a large extent the procedure is accessible, although the availability of formal independent advice is unclear. Therefore, 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

2.113 Work placements are a key component on most higher education courses. There are two generic work placement modules which are compulsory on several courses, and specialist compulsory work-placement modules on the foundation degrees in Veterinary Nursing, Equine Dentistry, and the BSc Viticulture and Oenology. In all cases work placement providers supply the learning opportunity required for students to complete the module, but are not involved in marking the assessments through which students demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.

2.114 Students, other than those on the Veterinary Nursing course, are required to find their own work placements although course teams will assist in putting students in contact with possible employers.

2.115 Course Leaders are responsible for approving placements; each work placement module has a module handbook and the student must have the health and safety forms completed by the work placement provider before they can commence the placement. Other than completion of these forms, there are no set criteria against which placements are approved by Course Leaders.

2.116 College processes would enable the Expectation to be met operationally although there are apparent weaknesses in strategic oversight.

2.117 The review team considered the documentary evidence, including placement module handbooks, health and safety forms and the recent College audit of placement activity report, and met staff, students and employers to discuss the management of placements in practice.

2.118 Veterinary nursing is subject to PSRB oversight of placement processes (including a requirement for placement visits) and the arrangements for Equine Dentistry are driven by the need to prepare students for the BAEDT examinations. Management of other work placements is at course level and there is no College-wide oversight of the process other than that which relates to the assessment processes linked to modules.

2.119 The report of the recent College audit of placement activity noted variability of practice in relation to the management and approval of placements and recommended the drafting of a new policy. This variability of practice is substantiated by the placement approval documentation seen by the review team and by discussion with employers about the degree of scrutiny given to new placement providers. As explained above, approval of individual work placements is currently through a health and safety form alone and does not therefore consider the suitability of the placement opportunity in terms of level and achievement of learning outcomes. The review team **recommends** that the College adopts a more strategic approach to the management and approval of work placements to ensure effective learning opportunities for students.

2.120 Tutorial support is provided to students throughout their placement, and this enables appropriate measures to be put in place should problems with the placement emerge in discussion with tutors.

2.121 There is no College requirement for students to be visited on placement or for any direct contact between the College and placement employers. Furthermore, employers are not systematically provided with information relating to the placements, which they would welcome, instead being dependent on receiving information in the module handbook from students. Employers whom the review team met were generally not aware of the academic purpose served by the student work placement and the 2011 IQER advisable recommendation to make available appropriate information and documentation for all workplace learning activities has not been fully implemented. The review team **recommends** that employers are provided with relevant information on the role of work placement in student learning.

2.122 The review team concludes that in the absence of strategic oversight and direct contact with placement employers the College cannot ensure that placement arrangements are implemented securely and managed effectively. The Expectation is therefore not met. The risk relates to a weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance structures as it relates to the management of work placement, but is ameliorated by the use of the tutorial system. The risk to the learning opportunities is therefore deemed to be moderate.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

2.123 The College does not offer research degrees and this Expectation is therefore not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.125 With the exception on B10 all Expectations are met and all levels of risk are low. Expectation B10 is not met and the level of risk is moderate. There are two recommendations relating to work placement that cover the provision of information to employers on the role of placement in student learning and the strategic approach to the management and approval of work placements. The risk is moderate rather than serious as students are achieving the learning outcomes through their placement modules and are supported in tutorials to achieve these. Furthermore, the tutorial system enables the identification of any issues students may have on work placement and appropriate measures can then be put in place. The review team makes a further recommendation to the College on the availability of formal independent advice for students wishing to complain or appeal (Expectation B9) and the risk in this area is low.

2.126 There are three areas of good practice identified in the extensive support for research and scholarly activity (Expectation B3), the many and varied mechanisms which engage students as partners in their educational experience (Expectation B5), and the effective, regular and systematic course monitoring and review processes (Expectation B8). The review team makes no affirmations regarding the quality of learning opportunities.

2.127 Overall, the College has effective systems, policies and processes for the management of the quality of student learning opportunities. It works closely with its degree-awarding body and implements University regulations and frameworks consistently and robustly. There are weaknesses in the operation of delivering learning opportunities with others through work placements although the College is aware of some of these weaknesses and has started to review and consider how these can best be addressed. The review team therefore concludes that the College's management of the quality of learning opportunities **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 agrees in the Memorandum of Cooperation with the University to provide accurate information. The University annually reviews the College website and the Higher Education Prospectus before publication.

3.2 The College has a Data Protection Policy and ensures appropriate and non-discriminatory language and information through the use of its Equality and Diversity Policy. Information relating to the College's mission, values and strategy is provided for the public to view within the Strategic Plan in the Key Governance section on its website.

3.3 Information is available for applicants from the Higher Education Prospectus, UCAS and the College website. There is a specific section on the website explaining the admissions process. The College provides pre-course information to students in the form of a letter and an induction timetable. The HE Admissions Officer also sends applicants the Student Handbook, programme specification, a FAQs document, bursary information, and accommodation information. After enrolment, the students receive a course handbook and access to the VLE.

3.4 Each course has an individual page on the College website and a separate page contains links to all the programme specifications. An electronic copy of the prospectus is also available on the website. The website also contains useful information on entry requirements, fees and financial assistance and the Access Agreement. The Head of Higher Education audited the College VLE in February 2016. The VLE course pages contain information such as the Course Handbook, programme specification, timetable, assessment information and learning resources.

3.5 Relevant courses also have key information set data on their course page, which is annually reviewed by the Head of Higher Education.

3.6 Course Leaders are responsible for ensuring that course information is correct on the website and information relating to support or facilities is the responsibility of that particular department. The Head of Higher Education is responsible for the information in the Higher Education Prospectus and is the point of contact between the College and the University with regard to information on all higher education provision at the College.

3.7 On completion of the course the College produces intermediate transcripts containing module marks and a final transcript stating the award the student has achieved. The University produces the degree certificate which is either awarded at the graduation ceremony or sent to the student in the post.

3.8 Information for staff involved with maintenance of academic standards and quality can be found in the Higher Education Quality Manual and information on admissions is in the HE Admissions Handbook; these are both available on the shared staff drive.

3.9 The process for the development and checking of information would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.10 The review team scrutinised the College website, including course pages, programme specifications, and the prospectus, analysed the relevant policies and documents and met staff and students to ascertain their experience of information provision at the College.

3.11 Information for staff and students is widely accessible through a number of avenues including the website, the VLE and on request, and information seen by the review team was consistent. However, the audit of the VLE clearly showed a significant variation in the information provided and its use by students, and, as students commented, this results in it being less useful overall.

3.12 The use of the University to double check and review the College's website and prospectus information ensures it is accessible, fit for purpose and trustworthy. While there is evidence of internal management of the publication and flow of information, it is dispersed across a number of documents, job roles, and 'gatekeepers'. In particular, a significant volume of gatekeeping is undertaken by the Head of Higher Education, despite not being in the job description for the role. The College has no information management policy and lacks a strategic approach to information management beyond the use of individual gatekeepers. While the extent to which individual gatekeepers have formal responsibility for specific information is clear, the gap in the process could result in information being produced and disseminated without the knowledge of senior management, by-passing gatekeepers, and without a check on the accessibility, suitability, or trustworthiness of this information. This leaves the College in a vulnerable position.

3.13 In Expectation B10 the review team makes a recommendation regarding the information provided to employers and noted a lack of clarity over responsibility for the provision of such information. The review team considers that the gap in the overall strategic management of information has contributed to the lack of appropriate information being given to employers on the role of work placement in student learning. In addition, with no information management policy, roles and responsibilities for information management are not clearly articulated anywhere. The review team **recommends** that the College develops a strategic approach to information management that clearly articulates roles and responsibilities for ensuring information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.14 As discussed at Expectation B2, information provided to students before enrolment has in the past been variable. However, the College now provides students with a wealth of comprehensive information at all stages about all elements of their course. Furthermore, if students are unsure or have questions they have the opportunity to discuss such uncertainties with the College. In the student submission students commented that the website provides 'a springboard to more personal contact with the College'.

3.15 The Higher Education Quality Manual provides detailed information regarding the maintenance of standards and quality, including links to the necessary forms for updating programme specifications and modules, and is used by staff. The Plumpton Board of Study agrees any changes to programmes or modules, allowing for further oversight and checking of information and these are then approved by the University. The Head of Higher Education reviews information such as the HE Prospectus, and programme and module specifications on an annual basis.

3.16 The review team concludes the Expectation is met. Information is consistent, accessible, and there are systems in place to ensure it is fit for purpose. Furthermore, it is reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and trustworthy. However, the lack of a strategic approach to information management and clear articulation of the systems to

manage information and the relevant roles and responsibilities, could result in information being disseminated without the knowledge and, if necessary, approval of senior management and this could cause issues in the future. The level of associated risk is therefore moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

3.18 The Expectation is met with a moderate risk. The review team finds no specific features of good practice and makes no affirmations. There is a recommendation to develop a strategic approach to information management as currently the College has no information management policy, and roles and responsibilities for managing the quality of information are unclear. There is a link to the recommendation in B10 regarding the provision of information to employers on the role of work placement in student learning.

3.19 Notwithstanding the recommendation, the review team considers the risk is moderate and not serious, as information provided to stakeholders is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The risk relates to the overall management of information and the possibility of untrustworthy information provided in the future given the lack of oversight and clearly articulated responsibilities for the various forms of information. The review team concludes that the quality of information on learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College states that it has put enhancement at the centre of its strategy. While the College Strategic Plan 2014-18 and Higher Education Strategy 2015-20 do not explicitly refer to enhancement these are currently being reviewed. The Higher Education Strategy outlines key priorities including growth, meeting employer and student needs, encouraging progression from level 3 and enhancing the College's reputation as a leading provider of land-based education in the South East. In addition SMT, led by the new Principal, has identified the improvement of teaching and learning as its prime focus for this academic year and this will impact on the learning opportunities of higher education students.

4.2 The College considers the HE Learner Engagement Policy, the membership of students on internal periodic reviews, the mid-year reviews, the AHR process, learning walks and the appointment of Development Coaches to support teaching staff as strategic initiatives to enhance learning.

4.3 Changes as a result of student feedback include more accessible Geographic Information System (GIS) software, a quiet zone in the library, a higher education computer room and higher education private study rooms for students, improvement in counselling facilities and additional funding for library books.

4.4 The College strategies and processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.5 The review team examined a range of documentary evidence, for example the Higher Education Quality Cycle and minutes of SMT meetings attended by the Head of Higher Education, to consider how and where the process of enhancement is embedded in the structural and operational framework of the College. The review team also met the Principal, senior staff, academic staff, support staff, employers and students.

4.6 It is clear that the College puts enhancement at the centre of its strategy and has a culture of continuous improvement. The Higher Education Strategy, the Higher Education Quality Manual, the Higher Education Quality Cycle and strategic planning staff consultation events demonstrate the College's commitment to the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.7 The rigorous course monitoring and review processes noted in Expectation B8 as good practice are used to identify opportunities for enhancement. The previous QAA review made a desirable recommendation to continue to identify, share and implement good practice and this activity is now embedded in the Higher Education Quality Cycle. There are also strategic initiatives which enable the sharing of good practice, for example, the peer review process, and the appointments of the Teaching and Learning Development Managers, the Development Coaches and the Head of Research and Development.

4.8 The College has robust processes for enabling student feedback on enhancement opportunities and this has been identified as good practice in Expectation B5. These include the use of Cross-College Course Boards and the Plumpton Board of Study, where students can express their views to senior staff, and student involvement in mid-year reviews, for example in the FdSc Veterinary Nursing and the internal periodic review process.

Enhancements brought about through these processes include increasing the availability of GIS software and the provision of on-site counselling facilities.

4.9 The College drives enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned manner at provider level, has an ethos which expects and encourages enhancement of student learning opportunities, and has processes in place for the identification, support and dissemination of good practice.

4.10 Overall, the College demonstrates that it takes deliberate steps at both strategic and operational level to improve the quality of its students' learning opportunities and therefore 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

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

4.12 The review team makes no recommendations or affirmations to the College on enhancement and has identified no specific features of good practice.

4.13 The College takes deliberate steps at provider level to enhance the learning opportunities of its students. This is underpinned by effective, regular and systematic course monitoring and review processes which are identified as good practice in Expectation B8. The College's Strategic Plan 2014-18 and the Higher Education Strategy 2015-20 provide a clear framework for enhancement and continual improvement. There is currently a clear focus on the improvement of teaching and learning and this will impact on the learning opportunities of higher education students.

4.14 The College also has many and varied mechanisms to engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience, which is identified as good practice in Expectation B5. This further enables enhancement through strong student feedback and interaction. Students are able to make suggestions for improvements to their learning experience and these are listened to and addressed wherever appropriate and possible.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The College strategy is to develop provision which will enhance student employability and the courses are clearly linked to areas of vocational practice. For example, the FdSc Equine Dentistry was written in conjunction with industry bodies and the FdSc Veterinary Nursing is subject to professional body scrutiny. Many opportunities to take professional qualifications alongside the formal University-validated qualification exist, sometimes as part of the course, as in the case of the Practical Agricultural Skills module on the Agriculture course, and sometimes as optional extras at additional cost, as in the case of the available qualifications on the Equine, Outdoor Adventure, Wine and Arboriculture courses.

5.2 All programmes include work placement modules, in most cases as a compulsory element of the course, and employability skills are embedded in the curriculum through the contextualisation of assessments in some modules. Work placements are often facilitated by the industry connections of staff. Enterprise and entrepreneurial skills of students are particularly encouraged through specific modules such as Entrepreneurship One, People Management, Wine Communications, and Agricultural Business Planning and Development. The existence of semi-commercial businesses at the College (the vineyard, winery, equine yard, Outdoor Centre and farm) also provide students with opportunities to develop relevant skills. Examples of modules using resources and approaches which link to employability include Batch Production (FdA Creative Metalwork) in which students work in conjunction with a local gallery to make and sell metal products, and Forestry Practice (FdSc Forestry and Arboriculture) in which students learn how to operate specific machinery used in forestry operations.

5.3 The College engages with employers in a variety of ways. Employers have been engaged in the course approval and review processes; for example, both the Veterinary Nursing and Equine Dentistry provision involved employers in the design of the curriculum. The wine subject area provided strong evidence of employment engagement, through the active Curriculum Advisory Panel, the engagement of employers in giving careers talks to students and the connection with industry through its wine skills knowledge transfer project.

5.4 Course teams provide support for career development and assistance with CV writing and the students whom the review team met felt that they were well supported in relation to careers advice. Both students and staff talked about the staff links with industry as providing assistance in this regard. Employers spoke favourably of the employability of students, and the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey results show that 79 per cent of those surveyed were working either full or part-time, many of them in occupations directly relevant to their courses.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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