



# Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

## Plymouth University International College

April 2016

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Plymouth University International College. The review took place from 7 to 8 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Carol Vielba
- Mr Stuart Cannell (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Plymouth University International 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)<sup>1</sup> 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 (Embedded Colleges) 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 Navitas UK is taking or plans to take.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on Navitas UK's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

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 6.

In reviewing Plymouth University International 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 Digital Literacy and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and Navitas UK 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.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859)

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Navitas UK's provision at Plymouth University International College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Plymouth University International College (PUIC).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Navitas and PUIC's 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.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Plymouth University International College.

- The continuity of staff involvement in the personal and academic development of students throughout their learning journey at the College and university (Expectation B4).
- The work with the University in managing and supporting student transitions which enables students to progress effectively (Expectation B4).
- The effective use of tracer data from the University in reviewing curricula and student performance and achievement (Expectation B8).
- The bespoke integrated information system which provides a means of monitoring and enhancing course delivery (Expectations C and Enhancement).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Plymouth University International College.

By September 2016:

- ensure all staff engage routinely with end of module feedback (Expectation B3)
- ensure consistency in the approach to the use of plagiarism-detection software by staff and students (Expectations B6 and C).

### Enhancement of student learning opportunities

The College has developed its approach to enhancement within the framework set out by Navitas UK. The College subscribes to Navitas UK's strategic aims and commitment to continuous improvement and enhancement. It has also implemented the required structural framework for enhancement including the establishment of a College Enhancement Committee (CEC) and a College Student Forum which feed into the wider governance structure.

### Theme: Digital Literacy

The College operates under Navitas UK's newly developed Virtual Learning Environment Strategy. This Strategy has several targeted aims, including ensuring that all students have access and interaction with appropriate learning materials and that staff and students are

provided with appropriate information and training to support their use of the virtual learning environment (VLE).

## About Plymouth University International College

In April 2009, Navitas Limited and the University of Plymouth entered into agreement to form an exclusive partnership and to establish the legal entity Plymouth Devon International College Ltd (PDIC), which would operate as an embedded pathway College on the university's Drake Circus campus. The College is aimed at meeting the educational demands of international students who are ineligible for direct entry to the university. PDIC Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Navitas Holdings (UK) Ltd which is wholly-owned by Navitas Limited, an Australian-owned company listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX). PDIC Ltd and Navitas UK Holdings Ltd are both registered in the UK with Companies House.

In 2012, the decision was made to apply to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to change the trading name of the College to Plymouth University International College (PUIC). This name was considered to better reflect the embedded nature of the College within Plymouth University, and would be more easily recognised in the international student market. PUIC, like each College in the Navitas UK network, has its own organisational structure inclusive of a dedicated marketing and admission team; student services and support team; academic services team; with central support provided for OSH/HR, Learning and Teaching; Compliance, Finance and ICT.

PUIC is managed by a College Director/Principal who is the key contact for Plymouth University. PUIC is an Associate College of Plymouth University and offers international students access to a broad array of undergraduate and postgraduate pathways delivered by the College and the University, comprising a series of stages of study, following successful completion of which students are awarded an appropriate degree by the University.

The College Strategic Plan is defined in a number of key documents. The PUIC Strategic Plan is derived from the Navitas University Programmes Division Strategic Plan. Outcomes achieved through activities highlighted in the plan help to inform the Navitas Limited University Programmes Division Balanced Scorecard which enables the 'health' of the company to be monitored. The College Strategic Plan focuses on the four key business drivers - customers (students), finance, internal processes, and, people and culture. The plan identifies strengths and weaknesses in the partnership identified by the College, and sets a series of measureable performance indicators against which the College can be assessed in relation to other Navitas UK business units, as well as defining a number of local tactical initiatives that aim to drive the success of the business and enhance service provision to students.

The College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy is the key document which states PUIC's approach to teaching and learning and outlines the importance of effective assessment and timely feedback.

The College action plan provides a single repository for the recording and monitoring of all identified actions from any of the meetings, committees, internal or external reviews in which the College participates. It is reviewed at every meeting of the College Management Team (CMT) and College Teaching and Learning Board (CTLB), and updated as required after each meeting. The College action plan is also mapped to the Navitas UK - Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013-18 to demonstrate the Colleges' adherence to the strategic aims of Navitas with regard to Teaching and Learning matters.

The College operates in accordance with agreed contractual arrangements with Plymouth University (PU) under a strategic document known as the Recognition and Articulation Agreement (RAA). The RAA sets out the committee structure established between both parties to enable monitoring and reporting of contractual activity at both a strategic and operational level. The combined PU/PUIC committee structure and its linkages to both the College specific and Navitas UK committee structures form a cohesive and effective framework for good governance. The organisational chart describes the various committees and meetings which link Navitas UK, PUIC and PU. The University's engagement with the committee structure has always been a key strength of the partnership between PUIC and PU, and has helped to establish an atmosphere of openness and trust to the mutual benefit of both parties.

A key change since the last review is the introduction, from September 2015, of a Curriculum Enrichment Programme (CEP) by PU to enhance the coherence of the student learning experience, improve satisfaction and retention rates and support students' employability. In essence, the CEP seeks to achieve a first class learning experience for all students.

The maintenance of academic standards is a vital requirement and one that receives the full attention of all College staff. The College works closely with PU as the degree-awarding body to ensure that all academic provision undertaken by the College is of the highest standard; meets the requirements of the University, and meets the expectations of the Quality Code.

The partnership governance structure described in the paragraphs above provides detail regarding the communication and review mechanisms which exist in order to support an effective quality assurance regime with the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) providing the key focus for the monitoring and reporting of teaching and learning activity. By meeting formally three times a year, AAC is able to capture and minute the outcomes of the day-to-day activity which takes place throughout the academic year, and the AAC reports generated by the College for these meetings provide a means of formally recording and tracking this work.

The safeguarding of standards is further enhanced through the annual monitoring process and periodic review. The College has also undergone annual review by QAA since 2012 under the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight process (see section 2), and for 2016, the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) process provides an additional opportunity to confirm the quality of the College provision and the learning opportunities provided.

The key challenge to maintaining and safeguarding academic standards arises through the various changes taking place across the University, and the possibility that the College might not be made aware of a proposed change which directly affects the College. An example of this would be a decision by Plymouth University to suspend or discontinue a programme of study which was offered through a PUIC pathway, and that information not being received in the College. With PU currently reviewing its portfolio of programmes, this scenario is a very real prospect. Having recognised the potential for this occurring, both PU and PUIC staff have established a mechanism to mitigate this risk. Faculty suspension/discontinuation forms which require multiple sign off from University staff also now contain a sign-off box for PUIC. The likelihood of such an event is therefore considerably reduced.

The Quality Code is used as the key external reference point by PU and PUIC. The College and University benchmarks its provision at programme level against the *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) ensuring that the threshold for academic standards is aligned to the programme learning outcomes with the relevant qualification descriptors in the FHEQ.

The College and University use Subject Benchmark Statements where appropriate in the design and approval of modules and programmes. For the College provision, the use of benchmark statements is monitored by Navitas UK QaSO who will alert the College when statements have been added or amended so that the College may update its programme documentation to reflect the latest statements.

PUIIC does not teach any programmes from which the qualifications will give entry into particular professions, and through which standards of entry are regulated by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

## Explanation of the findings about Plymouth University International 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 by Navitas and on behalf of the degree-awarding body**

**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 Academic standards for all College provision are set by the degree-awarding body, Plymouth University (PU), whose academic framework aligns with the FHEQ and other relevant UK and European reference points. Alignment is established during programme approval and monitored by the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC).

1.2 The review team found that the policies and processes in place for the use of national frameworks, guidance and benchmarks ensure that threshold academic standards are met.

1.3 The review team examined College policies and procedures for the design, approval and monitoring of programmes, documents created during programme approval, programme specifications, committee minutes, annual monitoring reports (AMRs), and external examiners' reports.

1.4 The review team found that the policies and procedures intended to ensure that provision met UK threshold standards through alignment with national frameworks were implemented effectively. Panel reports on the approval of proposed programmes at the College produced for the University's Academic Board confirm that proposed programmes



align with national frameworks and take account of qualification descriptors, Subject Benchmark Statements and regulations for the award of credit. Programme specifications refer to levels of the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, credit points and intended learning outcomes which are informed by national guidance. Guidance is provided to staff designing modules on how to check the appropriateness of levels of intended learning outcomes. External examiners confirm that the standards set are appropriate in relation to subject benchmarks, the national qualifications framework, and the relevant programme specification. In addition, AMRs confirm the programmes' alignment to Subject Benchmark Statements and the appropriateness of titles, aims, objectives and intended learning outcomes. The review team noted that academic standards was a standing item on AAC agendas.

1.5 On the basis of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that the College, with the support of its parent organisation and its university partner, operates procedures which ensure that its provision aligns with the FHEQ and other national frameworks and guidance. The Expectation is met in both design and operation and the 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**

1.6 The College's partner university (PU) has overall responsibility for the maintenance and delivery of academic standards leading to the award of its qualifications. The academic and governance framework is set out and agreed upon during the localisation process at the beginning of the working relationship. This process allows policies, processes and procedures to be correctly aligned to ensure consistency across the two organisations. This is in line with Navitas UK's regulations.

1.7 The responsibility for stages of each programme that are delivered within the College rests with the CTLB. The AAC provides oversight to the CTLB. The membership of this committee is made up from suitably qualified and experienced PU staff members to allow for robust oversight regarding the academic standards and quality of learning.

1.8 Navitas UK ensures it has robust oversight through the Quality and Standards Office, Learning and Teaching Committee and Learning and Teaching Forum (see A2.1 from Navitas UK's report for more detail).

1.9 The College follows the two-stage approach that is outlined in its assessment regulations, which is agreed by both Navitas UK and PU. This ensures all assessment marks go through an initial module panel before culminating in a progression board (see section A3.2 for more information).

1.10 The College has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies to allow this Expectation to be met.

1.11 The review team considered all appropriate and relevant evidence including programme specifications, committee minutes and assessment regulations. The team discussed the College's process of assessing credit with staff members and confirmed with students their understanding of the assessment regulations.

1.12 The review team found that the College is following the assessment regulations correctly and the operational aspect of the award of credit was fair. The assignment briefs are discussed with students, giving them a clear understanding of what was expected and how each assessment will affect their progression pathways onto the partner university.

1.13 Overall, the College has a transparent and comprehensive academic framework, set out by Navitas UK, which is followed. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation in Chapter A2.1 is met both in design and operation 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**

1.14 The College use programme specifications as the definitive source of information for each approved programme and qualification. These documents contain information around the aims, intended learning outcomes, content, assessment strategies and indicative reading of the programme of study. Definitive Module Documents (DMDs) set out all relevant information pertaining to that respective module.

1.15 When programmes undergo minor or major modification the College must follow Navitas UK's processes. The Programme Coordinator must fill out a standardised approval form that details the modification and why it is being sought. This is then signed off by all parties, including a relevant member of staff from the College, partner university and Navitas UK.

1.16 These documents are reviewed within the annual monitoring process, with the partner university having input to confirm that they are still fit for purpose.

1.17 The College have in place appropriate documentation and records of subsequent changes to it to allow this Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team examined all appropriate and relevant documentation including the programme specifications and DMDs. The team then checked with students about their understanding of these documents and confirmed with staff how they are used within the delivery and development of each programme.

1.19 The review team found that students were aware of the programme specifications and DMDs. Staff inform students at the beginning of each module what they need to do to pass and achieve specific grades. The team confirmed with students that these documents are available to download from the VLE and that there is no issue in respect of their accessibility.

1.20 The review team concludes that the College has in place appropriate documentation that is in line with Navitas UK's regulations, which is agreed upon by the partner university. Therefore, the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.21 Academic standards for all College provision are set by the degree-awarding body, Plymouth University (PU), during formal programme approval. Approval requires that proposed provision meets UK threshold standards and that the requirements of the PU's academic framework and regulations are met. Formal approval of amendments to existing courses confirms that these standards will continue to be met.

1.22 Approval of new programmes and amendments to existing courses involve the College, Navitas UK and PU. The processes for approval and amendment are discussed in detail in section B1 of this report.

1.23 The review team found that the College has policies and processes in place for programme approval which are designed to ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations.

1.24 In order to assess the effectiveness of the College's procedures for programme approval, the review team examined policy documents, templates and manuals, documents created during programme approval, programme specifications, and documents created during programme amendment.

1.25 The review team found that the policies and procedures for programme approval and amendment are implemented effectively and demonstrate clearly the incorporation of UK threshold standards and university academic regulations. During the course of design, programme and module specifications are created which detail intended learning outcomes and assessment strategies. Templates alert staff to appropriate internal and external descriptors and frameworks to use in designing new programmes. The example of an approval panel report seen by the review team affirmed that learning outcomes aligned with relevant qualification descriptors and that the proposed programme met the University's requirements in relation to academic frameworks and regulations for the award of credit. The approval panel, which included external members, also affirmed that students who successfully achieved the learning outcomes of the proposed programme would have met University academic and UK threshold standards. The full approval form for a new programme, which is signed by all three parties after the panel has reported, confirms that the curriculum has been scrutinised and is fit for purpose.

1.26 Minor amendments to programmes require the College, Navitas UK and the University to approve revised module specifications and to confirm that the learning outcomes of the revised module are at the appropriate level and have been mapped to assessment.

1.27 The review team concludes that the College, with the support of Navitas UK and PU, operates programme approval procedures which ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant

academic frameworks and regulations. The Expectation is met and the associated 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**

1.28 Within the programme approval and validation process, each programme develops a list of learning outcomes that are aligned with relevant descriptors of the FHEQ. These also take account of Subject Benchmark Statements. The agreed learning outcomes are then listed within each of the programme specifications and DMDs.

1.29 Assessment methods are agreed upon with PU in line with the assessment regulations, set out by Navitas UK. This enables a range of assessments to take place through formative and summative means. Students are then assessed in accordance with these agreed methods and will be informed about them at the beginning of their programme and module.

1.30 The College Learning and Teaching Board ensures that a module panel is convened once a semester. Within this panel meeting all provisional and raw marks are agreed upon. The panel has clear terms of reference and outlined membership within the assessment regulations.

1.31 The College Learning and Teaching Board will ensure that the Progression Board is convened once a semester. Within this board meeting the College will determine whether each student has met the criteria for progression from one stage to the next. The board has clear terms of reference and outlined membership within the assessment regulations.

1.32 The College have in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies to allow the Expectation to be met.

1.33 The review team examined all appropriate and relevant information including the assessment regulations, programme specification and DMDs. The team then met students to explore their understanding of the assessment procedures and met staff to confirm whether these procedures are followed correctly.

1.34 The review team found that these procedures are being followed correctly by all staff, and students have an appropriate level of understanding around the procedures that the College uses.

1.35 The review team concludes that the Expectation in Chapter A3.2 is met both in design and operation 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**

1.36 Responsibility for the standards of programmes offered by the College is vested in the university and its Academic Board which, through its committees and the Strategic Partnership Management Board, exercises oversight over College provision. The College monitors its programmes to check that UK threshold standards are being met through regular reporting on academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), annual monitoring and periodic review. Monitoring and review involves the College, Navitas UK and PU. External examiners' reports on standards feed into annual reports. Details of the processes in place for monitoring and review of provision are to be found in section B8 of this report.

1.37 The review team found that the policies and processes in place for programme monitoring and review are designed to check whether UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of the awarding body are being maintained.

1.38 In order to assess the effectiveness of the College's procedures for programme monitoring and review, the review team examined policy documents, templates and manuals, committee minutes, external examiners' reports, AMRs, and the report of the recent periodic review.

1.39 The review team found that the policies and procedures in place for programme monitoring and review are implemented effectively and demonstrate that UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of PU are maintained. The College reports regularly to Navitas UK on its achievement of academic KPIs, which include pass rates, and retention, completion, and progression data, including progress once students have entered the university. Reports on student achievement are considered by the AAC.

1.40 Statistical data on student performance is analysed in the AMR for each programme. The report also includes commentary on the currency of learning outcomes, aims and objectives and the comparison of the programme with College and sector benchmarks including, where appropriate, similar provision at the University. External examiners are asked to comment on the appropriateness of the standards of assessments set in relation to UK threshold standards and the approved programme specification, as well as on student performance.

1.41 Link tutors appointed by PU are responsible for maintaining a close watch on the delivery of programmes in accordance with agreed curricula and processes, and for raising issues impacting standards with the College.

1.42 The periodic review of College provision, conducted using PU processes, examines, among other things, outcomes and standards. The review looks at the currency and validity of provision, the design of curricula and assessment, student achievements, and the extent to which there is a shared understanding of outcomes. The periodic review panel which involves both provider and external members from other Navitas UK partnerships is able to make recommendations for improvement.

1.43 The College maintains oversight of monitoring and review, and any issues that arise relating to standards, through the AAC and necessary action is incorporated into the College's rolling action plan.

1.44 The review team concludes that the College, with the support of its parent organisation and its university partner, operates effective monitoring and review processes that demonstrate whether UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of the awarding body are maintained. Expectation A3.3 is met and the associated 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**

1.45 The College's relationship with PU is the main source of externality, which provides oversight regarding the regulation, governance and quality assurance of the academic work carried out by the College. This is primarily achieved through the governance structure that has been set up and the relationship between the link tutor and other relevant members of academic staff (see A2.1 for more information).

1.46 The College and partner university have set up an additional internal check to ensure the academic standards are upheld and potentially share good practice among staff. Under the Faculty of Science and Engineering is a liaison forum to consider specifically the performance of the College students on integrated programmes, reporting on student performance and knowledge shortcomings.

1.47 Navitas UK maintains overarching oversight with the College through the programme approval, annual monitoring processes and relevant committees which the College report to.

1.48 The College has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies to allow the Expectation to be met.

1.49 The review team examined all appropriate and relevant documentation including the College's Operations Manual, Assessment Regulations and external examiner reports. The team confirmed with staff members that these processes and procedures were being followed correctly to allow for this Expectation to be met in operation.

1.50 External examiners are used to add an additional level of external scrutiny within the College, which is in line with PU's regulations. The review team confirmed with staff how these reports are discussed within the governance structure and the significance that these have within the academic standards and quality of learning within the College (see B7 for more information).

1.51 The review team found that the College has sufficient external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards. The primary method for the ongoing checking of the academic standards is through the annual monitoring process and governance structure. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation in Chapter A3.4 is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the awarding body: Summary of findings

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

1.53 The College effectively uses the processes of its awarding body, Plymouth University, in ensuring that academic standards are maintained in line with the relevant level of the FHEQ and external reference points. The College's own internal processes, including effective programme approval and monitoring procedures, also make a valuable contribution to the maintenance of standards. There are appropriate opportunities for the use of external expertise within these processes.

1.54 The College has met all seven Expectations in this area and the associated level of risk is low. Therefore, the review team concludes that the College's maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its 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 and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 The College works with its partner university within an overall framework provided by Navitas UK. Navitas UK's policy and templates are customised by the College to reflect local structures. The processes and procedures involved are identified in the College Operations Manual which is available to all staff. University processes are set down in the University's Quality Assurance Handbook for Taught programmes to which staff have access. Proposals to develop new programmes are signed off by Navitas UK before they are presented for initial approval to PU. The College and PU work together to develop new provision. Approval and validation follows PU processes and includes an approval event involving College and PU staff and external advice. Final approval for College provision must also be given by Navitas UK.

2.2 The processes used to make changes to existing programmes depend on the extent of the change being made. Minor changes arising from annual monitoring require executive sign-off by the College, PU and Navitas UK; major changes normally require programme re-approval.

2.3 The review team found that the College has appropriate policies and processes in place for the design and approval of programmes in order to meet the Expectation of the Quality Code.

2.4 In order to test the effectiveness of the College's procedures, the review team examined policy documents, templates and manuals, read committee minutes, reviewed the documentation associated with the approval of a new pathway and integrated programme and the amendment of an existing one. The review team met those responsible for, and involved in, programme design and approval.

2.5 The documents seen by the review team confirmed that the College implements Navitas UK's and PU's policies and procedures for design, approval and amendment of programmes effectively. New programmes and changes to existing programmes are discussed at the AAC and the Strategic Programme Management Board, as well as being recorded in the College action plan. The example of documentation prepared during programme development, and presented jointly for approval, included a business case, programme and module specifications for both University and College modules, and mapping of College to University elements. The final approval panel gave consideration to matters of standards and quality as well as the involvement of the College in recruitment to the new programme. Students were not involved directly in the process but the business case reported results of surveys among potential applicants. The example of a minor modification to a programme seen by the review team confirmed that the process involved is thorough and implemented effectively.

2.6 The review team concludes that the College, in conjunction with Navitas UK and its partner university, operates effective processes for the design, approval and amendment of programmes that allow the Expectation to be met, and the associated 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**

**Findings**

2.7 The College supports and works with PU in relation to its strategy for internationalisation. The College has a localised Admissions Policy, which is derived from Navitas UK's Admissions Policy. This was agreed by Navitas UK's Senior Management Team in consultation with PU to ensure that Tier 4 visa regulations are complied with. The College's Admissions Manager is responsible for all aspects of application handling, working under and reports to the Director of Marketing and Admissions. All admissions staff undergo Tier 4 visa training by Navitas UK to ensure the complete understanding of the process. Staff must acknowledge and respond to all applicants within 48 hours upon receiving the application. This is a requirement set out by Navitas UK within its Admissions Policy.

2.8 The College works with Navitas UK in the use of student recruitment agents. This is the main route in which the College recruits students. Navitas UK has staff located in key offices to ensure an open line of communication between Navitas UK, the College and the agents. The student recruitment agents are formally trained and have to sign a contract with Navitas UK (this is further discussed within B2 of Navitas UK's report).

2.9 The College have in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies to allow the Expectation to be met.

2.10 The review team examined documents which set out the College's procedures and policies for the admissions of students including relevant strategies, committee minutes and staff guidance. The team looked at examples of promotional and recruitment material and the College's website. The team talked to students about their experience of the admission process and also heard from staff involved in recruitment and admissions.

2.11 The review team heard from students that the admissions process was easy to navigate and that there was sufficient support in place to enable the transition to be as smooth as possible. The students received appropriate information before applying to the College, upon arrival and within the formal induction period. Students who arrived after the initial formal induction period were given all appropriate and relevant information. If students felt there was an issue around this induction period or any confusion among the information they received, they felt confident that they could simply ask for assistance from reception or senior staff members.

2.12 The review team heard that the College has initial plans to expand its recruitment within Europe; however, this is on hold due to the current climate within the UK.

2.13 The review team confirmed that the College conducts credibility interviews with students from high risk areas when appropriate, which is in line with Navitas UK's procedures. The team concludes that the Expectation in Chapter B2 is met both in design and operation 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**

2.14 The College's approach to learning and teaching, set out in its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, is shaped by Navitas UK's overall policy frameworks and plans and the requirements of its partner university. The Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy sets out the College's mission, vision, and aims, together with plans and targets in order to fulfil them. It feeds into the College action plan. The CTLB is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategy, reporting to the AAC and Navitas UK. Operational implementation of the strategy involves the senior staff of the College and working with the partner university through link tutors.

2.15 The respective responsibilities of the College and the partner in relation to learning resources, staffing, programme delivery and assessment are set out in the College's Recognition and Articulation Agreement (RAA) and communicated to staff through the College Operations Manual.

2.16 The review team found that the College has appropriate policies and processes in place in relation to learning and teaching in order to meet this Expectation.

2.17 In order to test the effectiveness of the College's policies and procedures the review team examined policy documents, manuals and action plans, committee terms of reference and minutes, materials related to teaching observations, and student charters. The review team met staff and students to discuss learning and teaching matters. The team also attended a demonstration of the VLE.

2.18 Teaching staff are appointed by the College. Those teaching at Level 4 and above are first approved by PU and in many cases are University staff. All teaching staff have post-graduate qualifications and teaching experience. Systems of management and peer observation of teaching are in place. Staff have access to development opportunities at the College, the University and Navitas UK. Regular staff meetings take place.

2.19 Students who met the review team spoke positively about the teaching they received and the quality of the staff who taught them. Students receive timely and helpful feedback on their work and are able to review their progress with academic staff. Additional sessions are organised in subjects where students have particular difficulties.

2.20 Students have access to learning resources at both the College and the University. These resources include the library, computing and VLE. Students who met the review team confirmed that they found the learning resources available to them accessible and appropriate to their needs. Students receive a handbook and all teaching material and necessary information about their programme, the College and the University is available online. The College VLE is used widely in teaching: applications include uploading teaching materials, quizzes, and extension exercises. Level 4 students also use the University's VLE.

2.21 The College uses Navitas UK's Independent Learning Charter and its own student charter to define mutual obligations and expectations of the College and the students.

2.22 College staff teaching on integrated programmes work closely with their University counterparts to ensure equivalence between modules taught at the College and those taught at the University. Staff work from the same module specifications and where possible use the same textbooks.

2.23 The College collects feedback on teaching through questionnaires and surveys and through matters raised by students and their representatives at the Student Council (SC). End-of-module evaluations are completed and reviewed by the Manager of Academic Services who discusses adverse comments with staff. Module tutors may request the feedback scores on their modules. Tutors complete end-of-semester reflective reports but are not required to comment on module feedback in the process. The review team considered that the lack of analysis leaves the institution unsighted on an opportunity for enhancement. The College is **recommended** to implement a formal procedure that ensures all staff engage routinely with end-of-module feedback.

2.24 The review team concludes that the College, in conjunction with Navitas UK and its partner university, works effectively with its staff, students and other stakeholders to articulate, review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities that enable independent learning, depth of study and critical thinking. The Expectation is met and the associated 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**

2.25 The College works within the framework for supporting students set out by Navitas UK. Enabling student development and achievement is central to the College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy. The College Operations Manual sets out roles and responsibilities and monitoring requirements. Support services are provided by the College's Student Services team aided by Academic Services and tutors. Students have access to specialist support services at the University. The College adopts a holistic approach which aims to provide a range of support services that meet the needs of individual students at different points in their student journey.

2.26 The review team found that the College has appropriate policies and processes in place to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their potential.

2.27 In order to test the effectiveness of the College's policies and procedures the review team looked at policies and procedures, committee minutes and reports, handbooks, and internal communications. The review team discussed the availability of support services and the development of skills for higher education with both staff and students.

2.28 The review team concludes that the College provides a range of effective activities and support services that enables students to develop their academic and personal potential and to make a smooth transition to university studies. All students undertake an academic and professional skills module during each year of their programme. This module, which includes English language tuition, is central to the College's commitment to preparing students for successful transition to higher education and university programmes. Clubs are organised to provide additional academic support in English, maths, physics and architecture, the latter including mentoring.

2.29 Transition to PU is facilitated by attendance at university events, opportunities to meet College alumni, and contact with students' future study programme. On one programme a College/University buddy system has been set up. The on-campus location of the College, the use of University teaching rooms and resources, and co-teaching, assist students to feel part of the University from the commencement of their course. In the engineering area a joint College/University forum has been established which, among other things, fosters consistency of practice in the operation of stage 1 integrated programmes with respect to issues including induction, attendance, progress monitoring and student support. The work with PU in managing and supporting student transitions which enables students to progress effectively is **good practice**.

2.30 The College monitors attendance and student achievement closely. A Student in Jeopardy programme is in place to support students who encounter difficulties or need additional support. Students who are placed in this programme include those whose attendance is unsatisfactory, those who have failed modules, and students under 18 years of age. Students in the programme receive additional targeted support. All students receive tutorial support targeted to their needs at particular points. Encouragement is provided to high performing students in the form of prizes.



2.31 Information about student services is provided in student handbooks and is available on the web. The College organises and encourages a broad range of social and cultural activities.

2.32 The adequacy and efficacy of services that enable student development and achievement is monitored through measurement and reporting on academic KPIs such as retention rates and during annual monitoring and periodic review, and discussed at College committees. The College uses tracer data provided by the University to monitor the success of students once they have progressed to the University.

2.33 Students that met the review team spoke very positively about the way in which the College enabled them to develop and achieve. Alumni stated that College students were in many ways better prepared for university programmes than direct entrants. The continuity of staff involvement in the personal and academic development of students throughout their learning journey at the College and University is **good practice**.

2.34 The review team concludes that the College, in conjunction with Navitas UK and PU, operates effectively to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.35 The College works within the framework for student engagement set out by Navitas UK, and detailed in the College's Operations Manual. There is a system of elected student representatives. Student representatives sit on the College Learning and Teaching Board (CLTB) and College Enhancement Team (CET). All students are eligible to attend the SC which identifies issues that are passed to the CLTB. College students are associate members of the university's Students' Union.

2.36 Students complete module evaluations and surveys, both internal and external, at key points during their studies which feed into annual monitoring and periodic review of College provision.

2.37 The review team found that the College has appropriate policies and processes in place for student engagement.

2.38 In order to test the effectiveness of the College's policies and procedures the review team looked at policies and manuals, committee terms of reference and minutes, and published materials. The review team discussed student engagement with staff and students.

2.39 The review team concludes that the College exhibits an open culture and a range of opportunities for student engagement that are effective in allowing the student voice to be heard at all levels. The review team also concludes that the College responds effectively to student views and endeavours to ensure that students are aware of the contribution that they make.

2.40 Student representatives receive a handbook and are supported by the College's senior manager of student services. They also receive certificates acknowledging their contribution.

2.41 Students met by the team stated that they were able to contribute to discussions and to enhancement through the SC and their representatives: the College listened to their views and took appropriate action in response. Students also stated that the College responded to issues raised in module feedback and student surveys. Minutes of the SC and committees with student representation are posted on the VLE and notice boards. You Said, We Did posters are produced.

2.42 Staff and students who met the review team cited examples of changes that had resulted from student inputs. Additional classes were introduced in various subjects as a result of student feedback. The award of certificates to student representatives also resulted from student requests. The review team noted numerous examples in College committee minutes of issues raised by students being discussed and action taken as a result.

2.43 The review team concludes that the College takes deliberate steps in conjunction with its student body to promote a range of opportunities for students to engage in quality assurance and enhancement. The Expectation is met, and the 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**

2.44 The College operates under Navitas UK's Quality Manual, which sets out in detail the governance framework for establishing and managing the partnership between the College and PU in relation to assessment. The College also operates under its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2015-2017, which highlights goals that the College wishes to achieve and how it is expected to deliver them. The College has localised assessment regulations derived from Navitas UK's assessment regulations and agreed upon by PU. All relevant processes, procedures and policies are captured within the College's Operational Manual, which is updated on an annual basis.

2.45 Where elements of the course are delivered by the College, responsibility is delegated to the CTLB, with oversight provided by PU through the Faculty of Academic Partnerships, which is reported through the AAC.

2.46 The College includes all relevant assessment material within its programme specifications and the DMDs. These are made available to students at the beginning of each module and are available to view on the VLE.

2.47 The College has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies to allow this Expectation to be met.

2.48 The review team examined all relevant and appropriate documentation including policies, minutes from assessment boards and guidance material for staff. The team met students to discuss their experience and confirmed with relevant staff their input into the assessment procedures.

2.49 The review team confirmed that students were made aware at the beginning of each module of what they needed to do to pass each assignment. Students are able to submit draft work to their tutor to receive some comments for improvement before the final assessment takes place. Upon completing their respective assignments, the students received feedback in a timely manner, adhering to Navitas UK's 10 working day policy. Students generally found feedback to be helpful.

2.50 The review team found that the College follows the formal two-stage assessment process in which credit is agreed upon and awarded to each student. This is in line with Navitas UK's regulations; however, it has been localised and agreed upon by PU. The College Module Panel met each semester to oversee the assessment of modules and confirm grades. The College Progression Board met once a semester to determine whether each student has met the criteria for progression from one stage to the next. Both of these boards have full terms of reference and membership within the College assessment regulations.

2.51 The review team found that although there was relevant training material, there was a mixed understanding of how the College uses plagiarism-detection software in respect of learning, teaching and assessment, with some academic staff unsure how to use the

software. The team heard that all students are made aware of academic misconduct during the induction period and throughout their time at the College; however, a large number of students were unaware of this. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the College clarify the use of plagiarism-detection software for staff and students.

2.52 The College works within its agreed assessment procedures set out by Navitas UK and agreed with PU. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

**Findings**

2.53 The College sees PU as being its key link with regard to academic externality. Where appropriate, external examiners are chosen by the College and agreed upon by PU. The assessment regulations outline what modules and programmes are officially externally examined and which are only moderated through internal and other external means. Since September 2015, Level 4 programmes have an official external examiner, which is in line with PU's assessment regulations. The College teaches pre-master's programmes which also have an official external examiner.

2.54 The ILSC module is moderated by Navitas UK through its assessment regulations (see Navitas UK's report for more information).

2.55 The College has in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies to allow this Expectation to be met.

2.56 The review team examined all appropriate and relevant documentation including external examiner reports and subsequent meetings in which they are discussed. The team talked to students about their knowledge of these reports and confirmed with relevant staff how they contribute to this process and how they use these reports for enhancement purposes.

2.57 The review team found that the external examiner reports are being used correctly with comments focused on a number of areas including threshold standards, FHEQ and applicability of Subject Benchmark Statements. These reports are then fed into the annual monitoring process to allow for enhancement activities to occur (see B8 for more information). These reports are uploaded to the VLE for students to view.

2.58 The College clearly operates within Navitas UK and PU's assessment regulations. The review team concludes that the Expectation in Chapter B7 is met both in design and operation 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**

2.59 The College works with its partner university within an overall framework provided by Navitas UK, which has been customised as a College policy.

2.60 The Manager of Academic Services holds meetings with College and University staff after which AMRs for each programme are prepared using a standard template. Issues identified during the preparation of these reports are raised at the CET and discussed at the CLTB. AMRs are presented to the spring meeting of the AAC which involves both College and University staff. Copies of the reports are sent to Navitas UK.

2.61 Periodic review of College provision is conducted using PU procedures including a panel event that involves Navitas UK, University and external members. The outcomes of periodic review are incorporated into the College action plan. College provision is included in relevant subject-specific periodic reviews within the University.

2.62 The review team found that the College has appropriate policies and processes in place for the monitoring and review of its programmes in order to maintain standards and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

2.63 In order to test the effectiveness of the College's procedures the review team examined policy documents and templates; read monitoring and periodic review reports and action plans; looked at committee minutes; met with those responsible for and involved in annual monitoring and periodic review and received written responses to questions.

2.64 The evidence seen by the review team confirmed that the College implements both Navitas UK's and the University's policies and procedures for the monitoring and periodic review of programmes effectively. AMRs include commentary on implementation of the previous year's action plan; data on student numbers, progression and retention; student feedback and a review of teaching and learning. Reports incorporate comments from University staff. College committee minutes demonstrate that issues emerging during annual monitoring are picked up within the governance system.

2.65 The tracer data provided by the University is detailed and allows comparisons to be made between the performance of College students and direct entrants to the University from comparable backgrounds. The effective use of tracer data from the University in reviewing student performance and achievement is **good practice**.

2.66 The periodic review of College provision took place two years ago and was based on a broad range of data. The review panel involved four external advisers drawn from other provider Colleges. The panel noted areas of good practice and issues to be addressed. Senior committees of the College received and discussed the final report. The issues identified gave rise to an action plan that was agreed with the University and incorporated into the College action plan with attached timescales, responsibilities and success criteria for monitoring by senior committees of the College.

2.67 The College has developed a forum in the science and engineering area which brings together staff of the College and the University to monitor integrated College programmes in the subject area.

2.68 The review team concludes that the College, in conjunction with PU, operates effective processes for the monitoring and review of its provision that allow the Expectation to be met, and the associated risk low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.69 The College has a localised Student Appeals and Grievance Policy and Student Disciplinary Policy that has been derived from Navitas UK's policy and agreed upon by the PU. Within these documents the process for formally lodging an academic appeal or complaint is outlined in detail, highlighting what happens at each stage and how long the process may take.

2.70 The College have in place appropriate processes, procedures and policies to allow this Expectation to be met.

2.71 The review team looked at documentary evidence including the policy documents and committee meetings. The team met students to discuss these processes and their understanding of them and met relevant staff to discuss how they inform students.

2.72 The review team found that although there is no mention of the Office of Independent Adjudicator within the Student Appeals and Grievance Policy, students can in fact appeal at this level if they are dissatisfied with the initial outcomes. Staff informed the team that when any issues emerge they try to resolve them informally before they become a formal appeal or complaint.

2.73 Students that the review team met had mixed understanding and knowledge of the formal policies in place that would assist them with any academic appeals or complaints. The review team heard that if a student felt that they needed to make an academic appeal or complaint they would go to reception to receive more information or go straight to senior management to have the issue resolved.

2.74 Overall, the review team concludes that the College has fair, effective and timely procedures for handling student academic appeals and complaints. The current level of appeals and complaints is low but the process in place to ensure they are effectively resolved is robust. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.75 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All of the Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. The team identifies three features of good practice. There are two recommendations.

2.76 The features of good practice include the continuity of staff involvement in the personal and academic development of students throughout their learning journey at the College and University, the work with the University in managing and supporting student transitions enabling students to progress effectively, and the effective use of tracer data from the University in reviewing curricula and student performance and achievement.

2.77 The recommendations for the College focus on ensuring that all staff engage routinely with end of module feedback and that there is consistency in the approach to the use of plagiarism-detection software by staff and students.

2.78 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at Plymouth University International College **meets** UK expectations.

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

#### Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

##### Findings

3.1 The College adopt a multi-faceted approach regarding the dissemination of information about its provision to relevant stakeholders. This is in the format of digital information relayed on its website and VLE and printed material in the format of course-related material and marketing-related material. The Director of Marketing and Admissions submits marketing material to the College Senior Management Team, which is then sent to and agreed upon by PU's Marketing Department, allowing for review and scrutiny.

3.2 All course-related information is developed and agreed upon in partnership with Navitas UK and PU. PU has final sign-off as it is ultimately responsible for maintaining the academic standards within the College. The College Principal is ultimately responsible for the accuracy of the College's policies and procedures, which are localised during the creation of the College and periodically checked and updated by Navitas UK. Any amendments to the localised policies are confirmed by the AAC and noted in the College Operations Manual.

3.3 The College has appropriate processes, procedures and policies in place to allow this Expectation to be met.

3.4 The review team examined all appropriate and relevant documentation and received a demonstration of the VLE. The team asked students about all information they have received before and after applying to the College and confirmed with relevant staff that this information is made accessible to all parties.

3.5 The review team found that the information students received was fit for purpose and appropriate. Students have access to the College's and PU's VLEs; however, having access to two separate systems posed no emerging issues.

3.6 The team received a demonstration of the College's VLE and student information management system. Students have access to a large number of relevant material including committee meeting minutes, learning and teaching material, and external examiner reports. Managers and system administrators have access to specific functions that allow them to directly text and email students regarding potential changes that may have immediate impact on the student, such as changes to classrooms. The College recently developed a forum attached to its VLE that allows staff to share good practice among themselves about learning, teaching and assessment. Thus, the bespoke student information system, which provides an integrated means of managing and enhancing course delivery, is **good practice**.

3.7 The review team found that the College uses the tracer data generated by PU for the monitoring of student progression. Having access to this information means the College is able to successfully state how students that have progressed through the College fare by comparison with other international students who have entered directly into PU. This information is then used to help drive recruitment activity. Therefore, the use of tracer data to inform recruitment, progression and quality assurance is **good practice**.

3.8 The College, in conjunction with Navitas and PU, has effective quality assurance policies in place to ensure the accuracy of information about its higher education provision. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement relating to the quality of information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The team identifies two features of good practice in this area, namely the bespoke integrated information system which provides a means of monitoring and enhancing course delivery, and the use of tracer data to inform recruitment, progression and quality assurance.

3.10 There are no recommendations or affirmations in this area.

3.11 The College has robust systems for the production and monitoring of information. The team also recognises the effective use of the VLE for the provision of information for prospective students and for the management of assessment for current students.

3.12 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at Plymouth University International College **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

### Findings

4.1 The College has developed its approach to enhancement within the framework set out by Navitas UK. The College subscribes to Navitas UK's strategic aims and commitment to continuous improvement and enhancement. It has also implemented the required structural framework for enhancement including the establishment of a CET and Student Forum which feed into the wider governance structure.

4.2 The College has a three year Enhancement Plan within its wider College Action Plan (CAP) designed to address local issues and opportunities and support Navitas UK's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Enhancement Plan has been designed as deliberate steps to improve the quality of student learning opportunities. It was developed from an analysis of the College KPI outcomes and the CAP. The current plan focuses on the experience of new students arriving at the College; student accommodation; support services; learning and teaching; and relationships with PU. Oversight of the implementation of the Enhancement Plan involves the CET and senior committees of the College.

4.3 The College aims to embed continuous improvement and the dissemination of good practice across its activities using quality assurance mechanisms such as peer observation, student feedback, external examiner feedback, and annual monitoring. The College's enhancement plans and actions are also shaped to dovetail with PU's enhancement priorities. For example, the University has recently undertaken a Curriculum Enrichment Programme which aims to enhance the coherence of the student learning experience, improve student satisfaction and retention rates and support employability. This has resulted in parallel changes in the College's Level 4 provision including new modules, assessment strategy and further emphasis on skills for employment.

4.4 Among the initiatives that the College has recently undertaken is the creation of a bespoke integrated information system which provides single access points for staff and students to College and programme information. The system has been described in greater detail in Section C of this report and is recognised by the review team as good practice.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

### Findings

5.1 The College operates under Navitas UK's newly developed VLE Strategy. This Strategy has several targeted aims, including ensuring that all students have access and interaction with appropriate learning materials and that staff and students are provided with appropriate information and training to support their use of the VLE.

5.2 The College states that as its students are from across the globe it has no expectation on a minimum level of digital literacy skills that they might possess. To assist in starting to develop students' digital literacy skills, the College started to teach a compulsory ICT module, which is delivered at foundation level. This was initiated by Navitas UK. The module gives the student experience in the use of common productivity and software management programmes that will be required throughout their studies at the College and PU. This ensures a baseline in the students' digital literacy skills going forward.

5.3 Additionally, all students undertake the Interactive Skills and Communication module. This expands on the ICT module and gives students experience around the relevant software packages.

5.4 Overall, students are prepared effectively for their respective progression pathways within PU regarding their digital literacy skills. The review team found no obvious failing by the College in this preparation.

## 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 24-27 of the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\) 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](http://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](http://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

### Embedded College

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education

### **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* (FHEQIS).

### **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.

### **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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