Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group)

Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre

October 2016

Contents

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 Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre. The review took place from 18 to 19 October 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Gaynor Taylor
- Professor Denis Wright.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre 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 (Embedded Colleges) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
- provides a commentary on 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.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on the provider'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 5.

In reviewing Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre 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 Literacies and Student Employability,[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 (Embedded Colleges).[4] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

---

[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of the provider **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- 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 Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre:

- the use of 'drop-in' observations of teaching by management to inform the annual appraisal process, leading to more focused staff development (Expectation B3)
- the range of ways in which the Centre is engaging with its partner university to systematically enhance the curriculum (Expectations B3, B4)
- the comprehensive and integrated support that enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).

Enhancement of student learning opportunities

The Centre Action Plan is in place and includes actions from the provider, QAA and the Centre. Enhancements to note in particular are the introduction of progression tracking with interventions to support students in danger of failing to progress, the introduction of the Welfare Officer, the appointment and use of link tutors and development of the VLE.

Theme: Student Employability

Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre (RHISC) are introducing 'CareerAhead', Study Group's employability enhancement project, during 2016-17. The approach being taken at RHISC is to embed the 'CareerAhead' programme across the curriculum and the 'Employability Lead' has mapped skills to learning outcomes for all modules. Information on 'CareerAhead' is in module handbooks and students will complete a Study Group employability questionnaire in January 2017.

Student are encouraged to participate in the partner higher education institutions' 'Passport Award', where students build up 'points' through various activities and attendance at career-related events.

Students develop transferable skills through classroom-based and independent study activities, such as research skills, critical thinking, team-working, presentation skills, time management and IT skills.

About Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre

Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre (RHISC) was established in September 2011 and delivers the International Foundation Year (IFY) under Study Group (the provider)-approved provision. The Centre currently operates from one main site on campus, with access to four classrooms and five offices. Furthermore, use has also been made of a number of Royal Holloway teaching rooms across the campus and a physics lab at a local college since 2014-15. The Centre has 15 teaching staff (approximately 9.5 full-time equivalent), one Head of English, one Welfare/teaching tutor, two administration staff and the Head of Centre.

RHISC enrolled 140 students onto the IFY in September 2015 and a further 46 students in January 2016. Both intakes were over a wide range of nationalities (over 20 different countries) with the largest cohort of students from China (33 per cent).

RHISC currently delivers the IFY, commencing either in September or January, with the following five pathways; Business, Economics, Arts, Sciences and Social Sciences. The Centre also offers a one-term English Language Preparation (ELP) Programme commencing in June or September.

There is a contractual agreement that no more than 33 per cent of the student body progresses into the School of Management. The Business & Economics pathway was split into two separate pathways in 2015-16, which enables better tracking and management of students to meet this limit more effectively.

RHISC has undergone a number of organisational changes with the Head of Academic Subjects (HoAS) moving into the newly developed Welfare Tutor role in January 2016, with the HoAS role now undertaken by an experienced tutor as an Academic Lead. A new Head of English was also confirmed for July 2016. A proposal for a staffing restructure to fully support the operations of the Centre is currently being considered by Study Group.

The initiative to introduce the role of Departmental Link tutors has progressed. Link tutors have now been appointed and they meet regularly with Centre staff. Prior to this, the Centre established effective relationships with the various University departments via tutor contacts.

Since the 2015 Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight undertaken by QAA at RHISC, the Centre Action Plan has been used to address all actions identified by Study Group, QAA and the Centre.

A Centre priority has been the implementation of a Study Group-led system for progression tracking and early intervention. The role of Welfare Tutor was also introduced, which enables a clearer focus on personal tutorials and aims to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to addressing any academic and pastoral concerns identified.

The Centre has been working to increase staff's competency in the use of the VLE to continue to improve e-learning opportunities. An E-Learning Champion has been identified and the Study Group's minimum expectations for the VLE have now been met, but the Centre aims to further develop and enhance the VLE during 2016-17.

Explanation of the findings about Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre

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 the provider

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 Study Group is not a degree-awarding body, and does not offer credit, but its programmes are benchmarked, during initial development and at approval and re-approval (or validation and revalidation according to the specific partnership academic arrangement), against *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), for programmes set at levels 4 to 6, and against the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) for preparatory programmes set at level 3. It uses the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for English programmes.

1.2 Royal Holloway University of London International Study Centre (RHISC) offers an International Foundation Year, with five pathways in Business, Economics, Art, Sciences and Social Sciences, approved by Study Group and endorsed by the partner institution. Until 2014-15 the programme was validated by the partner institution. In May 2014 an approval event took place and four pathways were approved by Study Group and endorsed in December 2014 by the partner University. A Centre Review followed in March 2015. In November 2015 the pathway in Business and Economics was split into two. The Centre also offers a one-term English language preparation programme.

1.3 The approval, endorsement and Centre review processes, taken together, would allow the Expectation to be met, although the approval event took place before the introduction of the Study Group's current approval process.

1.4   The team considered papers relating to the approval, endorsement and Centre review processes and programme and module specifications. Meetings were held with the Head of Centre and with a group of senior staff including representatives of the partner university.

1.5   The original approval event predates the current Study Group process. The panel included a single external whose role was to comment on subject matter and level/standards for the wide range of programmes offered. The review team noted that this remit was difficult for one individual to achieve and that the record of the event did not show explicit consideration of standards. Senior staff who met with the review team explained that this was indicative of the approval process at the time which they saw as lacking in some regards. They confirmed that Study Group's processes for approval and re-approval events are now more robust and that to assure standards in the case of the RHISC programmes, there had been a comprehensive endorsement event held by the partner university with course specifications scrutinised by the University's admissions tutors in the relevant areas and benchmarking to RQF level 3. There had also been a Centre review held in March 2015 during the first year of operation which included explicit consideration of the use of UK external reference points in the management of academic standards, which concluded this was satisfactory.

1.6   The programme specification makes a reference to RQF 3 as the programme level and learning outcomes are worded in a way that corresponds to that level. Module specifications also list aims and learning outcomes at an appropriate level.

1.7   The processes of endorsement and Centre review used in addition to the Study Group approval process ensure that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low, particularly since further approval and re-approvals will now follow Study Group's current process.

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   Governance of RHISC's quality assurance processes is overseen by the Study Group, who is responsible for the approval of academic programmes (see section B1). While not a credit-awarding institution, Study Group's quality assurance framework and processes are designed to ensure that RHISC modules and programmes are in line with the partner HEI's credit structure.

1.9   RHISC's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) monitor academic standards within programmes (see section B8), update and implement the Centre Action Plan (CAP), and receive and act upon directives and guidance from the Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (RQAEG). QAEG meets quarterly and reports to Study Group's Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (AQEAC) through RQAEG.

1.10   The partner HEI, Royal Holloway, has oversight of the RHISC provision through a Joint Steering Committee, an International Foundation Year (IFY) Monitoring Group and an IFY Operations Group. The Centre Handbook provides a detailed guide to the management of academic standards and quality. The IFY was re-endorsed by the HEI partner in November 2014.

1.11   These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.12   In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the terms of reference and minutes of quality assurance committees, and scrutinised Centre Handbooks and other relevant documents. The team tested its findings through discussions with the Head of Centre and other RHISC staff, and with representatives of Study Group and the HEI.

1.13   The Centre Handbook provides a comprehensive guide to the management and operation of RHISC, including its committee structure and their terms of reference, and lines of reporting to AQAEC.

1.14   The review team found that there were effective and robust mechanisms in place for the assurance of quality and standards at RHISC, with AQAEC maintaining oversight of RHISC's academic framework and regulations through Centre Review (CR), Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) and the CAP process (see section B8). The CAP is a key document for development and enhancement of standards and quality of RHISC, and is reviewed weekly with the Regional Director.

1.15   The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) comprises staff from the HEI, including the Deputy Principal (Planning Resources and Partnerships), Academic Registrar and the IFY Link Tutor, and Study Group, including Managing Director HE UK and Europe, Regional Director and RHISC Head of Centre. The JSC discusses strategic issues, the outcomes of any external reviews and actions to be taken, and receives reports from the IFY Monitoring and IFY Operations groups. The IFY Monitoring Group oversees the effectiveness of arrangements for the delivery of the programmes and ensures they meet the academic standards required for students to progress to the HEI. The Monitoring Group is chaired by

the HEI's Academic Registrar, and includes Associate Deans relevant to the three IFY pathways, the IFY Link Tutor, the Study Group Regional Director and the RHISC Head of Centre. The review team heard of the key role played by the IFY Link Tutor in maintaining an overview of quality assurance processes for the HEI and as a communication link with RHISC. The HEI, working in conjunction with RHISC, has now extended the link tutor system to include subject-based tutors from key academic departments.

1.16   From scrutiny of academic structures, documentation received and meetings with staff, the review team found that the quality assurance framework and associated processes ensure the RHISC IFY programmes remain equivalent in terms of credit with undergraduate degree programmes at the partner HEI.

1.17   Based on the above findings, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.18   RHISC programmes have a set of required definitive documents, comprising a programme specification and module specifications, which are produced by RHISC based on Study Group templates, and include information on alignment with subject benchmarks, learning outcomes and their assessment. Study Group maintains a central library of definitive documents, together with other key documents, including module and student handbooks. A third, newly introduced, definitive document, the Centre Specification, records additional information for each ISC, including entry requirements, external examiners and progression awards at partner HEI and their entry requirements. The Study Group Registry will take on responsibility during 2016-17 for publishing these documents as a record of what is being delivered at each ISC, and which programmes have been approved or validated. The Registry will be responsible for maintaining the accuracy of the information and publishing the Centre Specification (see section C).

1.19   The Study Group Academic Manager is responsible for ensuring stored documents are accurate and current, and works with the Study Group Quality Team to maintain a record of any changes to ISC modules and programmes; membership of the AQAEC subcommittee, the Programme Approval and Validation Committee (PAVC), facilitates this role.

1.20   The above structures and procedures would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.21   In considering this Expectation, the review team examined sample RHISC module and programme specifications, the draft Centre Specification, student handbooks, the CAP and other relevant documentation. The team tested its findings through discussions with RHISC staff and students and senior representatives from Study Group.

1.22   Programme, module and Centre specifications seen by the review team confirmed that they provided definitive records of the RHISC academic provision.

1.23   RHISC staff confirmed the role of QAEG in developing and revising programme and module specifications, with input from tutors, students and external examiners. The RHISC 2015-16 CAP included actions, now completed, relating to module specifications. Discussion with students indicated they had a good knowledge of the assessment procedures on their programme.

1.24   Through a review of relevant documentation and meetings with staff and students, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): 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 Standards are set at the stage of programme approval. As indicated in section A1, an approval event took place and four pathways were approved by Study Group and endorsed in December 2014 by the partner University. A Centre Review followed in March 2015. In November 2015 the pathway in Business and Economics was split into two.

1.26 The approval, endorsement and Centre review processes, taken together, would allow the Expectation to be met, although the approval event took place before the introduction of Study Group's current approval process.

1.27 The team examined approval, endorsement and Centre review process documentation and external examiner reports. Meetings were held with the Head of Centre and with senior staff from the Centre, Study Group and the partner University.

1.28 As noted in section A1, the approval event predates the current Study Group process and senior staff who met with the review team explained that the approval process at the time was lacking in some regards. They confirmed that Study Group's processes for approval and re-approval events are now more robust and that to assure standards in the case of the RHISC programmes, there had been a comprehensive endorsement event held by the partner University with course specifications scrutinised by the University's admissions tutors in the relevant areas and benchmarking to RQF level 3. There had also been a Centre review held in March 2015 during the first year of operation which included explicit consideration of the management of academic standards, which concluded this was satisfactory with one recommendation concerning the chairing of committees considering assessment outcomes. In line with Study Group's approval process, a further review took place after the first year of operation with the programme being evaluated through feedback from students, staff and Visiting Examiners. A number of changes were recommended and the Centre applied to AQAEC for approval of these.

1.29 External examiners' reports received all indicated that standards were appropriate.

1.30 The processes of endorsement and Centre review used in addition to Study Group's previous approval process ensure that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low, particularly since further approval and re-approvals will follow Study Group's current process.

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

1.31   RHISC programmes have overarching learning outcomes, to which their module learning outcomes are mapped. Learning outcomes are defined in programme and module specifications and described in student handbooks. Each assessed assignment has marking criteria to inform students what they need to do to achieve particular grades.

1.32   The programme approval and monitoring and review process ensures that the academic standard is at the appropriate level and assessments measure achievement of learning outcomes (see sections A2.1, B1 and B8).

1.33   Module marks and grades for RHISC modules and programmes of study are ratified at Module Assessment Boards (MABs). The Programme Assessment Board (PAB) verifies achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified FHEQ level, and is normally chaired by a senior member of the partner HEI.

1.34   The above arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.35   The review team tested this Expectation through examination of programme and module specifications, approval and review documents, and external examiner reports, and through discussions with Centre and Study Group staff, and students.

1.36   The review team found that learning outcomes for module and programme specifications were clearly linked and that they could be demonstrated through assessment.

1.37   The PAB incorporates academic oversight by external examiners, who confirm in their reports that learning outcomes and assessments are at the appropriate level.

1.38   To ensure learning outcomes remain appropriate, regional training events involving external experts are being held for staff developing and reviewing programmes and modules.

1.39   A feedback pro-forma allows markers to provide feedback to students on how they have met the expectations set out in the assessment criteria. Students who met the review team confirmed that it was clear what was required for each assessment and to achieve a particular grade, and that the feedback they received on their work was helpful.

1.40   Study Group aims to enhance the consistency of assessment across the ISC network through implementation of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework during 2016-17.

1.41   From scrutiny of relevant documents and discussions with academic staff and students, 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

1.42   An annual monitoring report and associated action plan are produced by the Head of Centre in the Autumn Term. Annual monitoring reports on the academic year 2015-16 onward will be based on Study Group's template. A process of periodic review/re-approval at least once every five years is in place and will use Study Group's approval/re-approval process.

1.43   These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.44   The review team tested this Expectation through a review of documentation including the annual monitoring report and the re-approval process together with discussion with the Head of Centre.

1.45   The annual monitoring report for 2014-15 is brief, but includes external examiners' reports as an appendix, hence picking up any issues about standards. The report for 2015-16 is due in December 2016 and will use Study Group's template which includes external examiners' reports and progression figures relating to standards.

1.46   Re-approval when required will use Study Group's process and will include external panel members and, where possible, student members.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.48   RHISC uses independent, external academic expertise in the Centre's quality procedures and processes, including programme approval panels and external examining.

1.49   The above arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.50   To test this Expectation, the review panel examined programme approval and review documents, and external examiner reports, and held discussions with the Head of Centre and senior academic staff.

1.51   The quality assurance roles played by external panel members in the approval of programmes are outlined in the Study Group Approval Handbook and referred to in the RHISC Centre Handbook. At the 2014 RHISC Programme Approval Event, the panel included an external academic, who provided oversight on the effective use of external reference points and Ofqual descriptors for Level 3 qualifications (see section B1).

1.52   External examiners in 2014-15 and 2015-16 found that the standard of assessment was appropriate for the level. External examiner reports inform the CAP.

1.53   The review team concludes that the use of external expertise in the Centre's quality procedures and processes is sufficient, and the Expectation is thereby met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the provider: Summary of findings

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

1.55   All of the seven Expectations in this area are met with low risk. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice recorded for this section of the report.

1.56   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards at RHISC **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 Programmes are developed and designed in conjunction with both Study Group and the partner universities to prepare students for entry onto a range of university courses as noted in section A1. Initial approval for development must be granted by Study Group's AQAEC Committee and, although this was not the case at the time of the RHISC approval, a lead role in such approval is now taken by the new Programme Approval and Validation Subcommittee, reporting to AQAEC. Programme design is discussed with the University partners and the proposed programmes subjected to Study Group's approval process.

2.2 External examiners are appointed to all subject areas and explicitly asked about both the standards and quality of the programmes.

2.3 The design of these processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team accessed approval documentation and held discussions with senior staff from the Centre and from the partner University.

2.5 Consultations with partner University departments took place with regards to appropriateness of the curriculum and to ensure that students were adequately prepared for their transition to degree-level study. The programme was then approved by the Study Group and endorsed by the partner University as described in section A3.1. In particular the endorsement process included close scrutiny of the curriculum content by partner University admissions staff in the appropriate subject areas.

2.6 The close links between the Centre and subject departments in the partner University are used to check curriculum in the Centre remains appropriate as University programmes evolve. Resulting changes are then subject to approval through Study Group's approval process.

2.7 The close links between the Centre and the partner University's staff ensure the Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

2.8   Recruitment and selection of students for RHISC programmes are generally processed centrally by the Study Group Admission Centre in Singapore and Brighton, and the admissions process conforms to UK Visas and Immigration requirements. The exception to this standard practice is that the Admissions Centre will refer applications for the IFY Arts (Music) pathway to the HEI's Music Department for pre-approval prior to any confirmation of offer of a place on the IFY. The Study Group Admissions Policy and Structure document describes the principles and structure by which admissions function.

2.9   Study Group Student Enrolment Advisors work with students who wish to apply directly to the ISC course of their choice without the use of an agent. The RHISC website provides a direct, online application process. Students applying through a local agent contact the agent for an application form. Changes to programmes are managed though PAVC and any changes affecting the availability of a programme or progression (articulation) to the partner HEI are managed by the admissions team to ensure applicants are kept informed and any necessary actions taken. A Study Group Admissions Complaints and Appeals Policy is now available for applicants (see section B9).

2.10   The above admissions policies, structures and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.11   To test the Expectation, the review team examined published information on admission requirements and the procedures regarding admissions, and held meetings with Centre and Study Group staff, with new students, and students who had progressed to a degree programme.

2.12   The RHISC website provides potential applicants with advice and guidance, including English language, academic and UK visa requirements, and information on fees. Entry requirements are maintained in centralised databases, and published on public-facing websites. Entry requirements are overseen by the Head of Centre, who works with the Academic Manager at Study Group to ensure that the entry requirements are current. Borderline cases are referred by the Admission Centre to the Head of Centre for a final decision on admission. Study Group and RHISC encourage disclosure of a disability at the application stage so that reasonable adjustments can be made.

2.13   The students who met the review team found the admission process straightforward, and had received sufficient information about the RHISC programmes, and of life at the ISC and in the UK prior to applying, and had been kept updated regularly during the application process. The students were complimentary about the induction process on arrival at RHISC.

2.14   The review team concluded that the admission process managed by Study Group was transparent and fair, with clear delineation of the role of the Centre Head in ensuring the currency of entry requirements for RHISC programmes and in considering borderline cases for admission. The review team found that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.15   The Centre has a clear policy on staff qualification and appointment is followed by a well-defined staff induction programme. Staff are subject to an annual performance review, including management observation of teaching. Peer observation of teaching, including cross-subject observations, is also in place. A range of staff development opportunities is offered.

2.16   The Centre's approach to learning and teaching is articulated in the Centre Handbook and a draft Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy has been agreed to align with Study Group's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework. Link tutors have been appointed and there is close engagement with progression departments. Module reviews feed back into teaching.

2.17   These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.18   The review team accessed documentation concerning induction, peer observation and annual performance review, together with the Centre Handbook, the Staff Handbook and the Centre Review report. Meetings were held with the Head of Centre, teaching and support staff and senior Centre and partner University staff.

2.19   Staff all have teaching qualifications and either hold a master's degree or are working towards this; some are qualified to doctoral level. There is an induction programme at the beginning of the academic year, which acts as an introduction to Centre systems and processes for new staff and a reminder for those previously employed. It was described as good practice in the Centre Review. A Centre handbook is provided as a resource to bring together 'information about the aims, objectives and governance of the Centre, the approach to the academic and student experience, and the practical operation of RHISC'. A staff handbook provides practical guidance about the working environment.

2.20   An annual formal performance review is in place and had been undertaken for all staff before the end of 2015-16. As part of this the Centre has trialled a new format in which line managers conduct unplanned and unannounced 15-minute (buzz) or 30-minute (drop-in) observations several times during the academic year, believing this to be a more accurate representation of the teaching and learning taking place as opposed to more lengthy and formal observation. Teaching staff concurred and reported that these short, unannounced observations by their managers were not intimidating, but actually less stressful than a planned observation and led to sharing of good ideas and ways of doing things. The review team considers the use of 'drop-in' observations of teaching by management to inform the annual appraisal process, leading to more focused staff development, to be **good practice**. Peer observation also takes place using templates supplied by Study Group and supported by clear guidelines. This process is primarily aimed at professional development and includes cross-subject observations. Examples were provided of the effectiveness of this process. Peer observation can feed into appraisals with the consent of the member of staff concerned. Module feedback may also highlight teaching issues, but this is addressed during the year rather than feeding into appraisals.

2.21   There is a comprehensive schedule of staff development events held in the Centre ; staff also reported attendance at Study Group events such as the Study Group Conference and training on the giving of assessment feedback. Staff development events at the partner University are available to Centre staff and there is a reduction on the price of evening courses at local colleges. Staff identified pedagogic and subject-related development opportunities and said they were encouraged to attend external courses and that Study Group may meet 50 to 100 per cent of the costs of such courses. The review team noted that all staff were trained in safeguarding to level 1 and in Prevent Duty. Online training and discussion was used to achieve this and a record kept. This training occurred within two weeks of starting for new appointments. Key staff including the Head of Centre and the Welfare officer had received level 3 training in safeguarding.

2.22   A full staff meeting is held every term with smaller programme team meetings weekly to disseminate information, check assessment/moderation/standardisation and share best practice and any cause for concern. Meetings are scheduled at times all staff, including those who are part-time, can attend.

2.23   RHISC has close relationships with its partner University. A formal link tutor role has been introduced. Link tutors and Centre staff meet informally every two weeks and a link tutor attends governance committees including the IFY Monitoring Group and the Programme Assessment Board. Link tutors check the curriculum is in line with the first-year University programmes.

2.24   There is close liaison with the partner department in cases where a portfolio of work is required as part of the progression requirements.

2.25   The partner University is tracking the performance of Centre alumni against other international students.

2.26   As part of the CareerAhead programme (see section on employability) RHISC students can access the partner University's 'Passport' programme which builds up a record of employment-related development and training. Points awarded during the IFY programme carry forward into the University programme.

2.27   The range of ways in which the Centre is engaging with its HEI to systematically enhance the curriculum is considered **good practice** by the review team.

2.28   The draft Learning and Teaching Strategy has been written by the Head of Centre in line with Study Group's Learning and Teaching Framework. It was shared with and commented on by other staff members and will be shared with the link tutors.

2.29   The review team found that the range of processes used and, in particular, the close relationship with the HEI **meets** the Expectation 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

2.30   Access to a wide range of University resources is specified in the contract. Students are welcomed to the Centre with an induction event and arrangements are in place to provide induction for late arrivals.

2.31   A Welfare Officer has been appointed and, among other duties, runs a revised personal tutorial system.

2.32   Progression rates have always been seen as a key performance indicator for ISCs. Until recently these were considered individually by centres. There is now a central Progression Steering Group in place to monitor and report on student retention and achievement across the network of ISCs. A review of the pilot tracking system during summer 2015 culminated in a framework being established across the network where standard definitions of student achievement through a red/pink/amber/green 'RPAG' status were determined and a systematic and common process for tracking student achievement and retention was agreed. The progression risk system is in place at RHISC.

2.33   Students have access to a virtual learning environment to support their studies.

2.34   Employability skills are built into the curriculum and visits are arranged to external organisations to support the curriculum.

2.35   The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.36   Documentary evidence was considered, including the contract, student and staff handbooks, the induction programme, an example progression tracker spreadsheet, minutes of the curriculum committee and module handbooks. Meetings took place with the Head of Centre, academic staff, students and senior staff from both the Centre and the partner University.

2.37   Resources are agreed as part of the contract with the partner University. In the case of RHISC, students have access to the library, including borrowing rights, specialist facilities such as music practice rooms and the full range of welfare services including counselling and disability support. They are also able to join in non-academic activities such as sport, social clubs and choirs. Laboratory space at a local college is rented for science students.

2.38   Students who met with the review team indicated that they had been well supported prior to their arrival in London and that the induction week was comprehensive and included a check of original qualifications documentation. Late arrivals had catch-up sessions to ensure they were not disadvantaged.

2.39   A Student Handbook offering comprehensive guidance is available; students were aware of this and said it contained all the information needed and that they would consult the relevant handbook on a 'need-to-know' basis. They were aware of the results needed to progress to their chosen courses, with grades listed in the student handbook and displayed prominently on noticeboards. In addition there is a handbook for each module which includes a scheme of work with a weekly breakdown of topics to be covered.

2.40   Personal support is provided by the Welfare Officer who holds group and individual tutorials with all students at least once a month, and more frequently for those who state they need or would like more support. The Welfare Officer also works closely with the academic staff.

2.41   This academic year the Centre has introduced the use of alumni, now pursuing their studies at the partner University, to act as mentors to current RHISC students. The mentors visit at induction and during the year, thus providing peer support in addition to the more formal processes just described.

2.42   Students have access to a virtual learning environment and an E-Learning Champion has been appointed. All modules use the VLE, some including activities such as quizzes. The E-Learning Champion has introduced minimum standards and is encouraging interactive use of the site rather than it being simply a repository for lecture notes and assignment details. The E-Learning Champion had also worked with IT staff at the partner University to improve the VLE landing page, another example of the close and productive relationship between the Centre and its partner University (see also section B3).

2.43   The Centre is tracking progression of its students using Study Group's approach with assessment and attendance information together with tutor comments used to assign ratings of red, pink, amber or green to each student. Attendance is regularly checked and if it falls below 85 per cent an informal meeting is arranged with the Welfare Officer. Continuing absence leads to a formal meeting with the Head of Centre and the Welfare Officer. Software is being implemented in the current year to make this process easier. Students at risk are currently discussed twice a term at the Curriculum Committee with the available data presented as a spreadsheet. Students meet with the Welfare Officer and interventions are used to offer a better chance of success. Interventions include additional classes, especially in maths and writing workshops as the progression requirement in this aspect of English is high. Specific subject support is also available if needed. Classes are not compulsory, but are strongly recommended and their likely impact highlighted. Analysis of the data demonstrating impact is planned and this will be easier once the software is in place, but the Centre noted anecdotal evidence that more students were meeting the higher tariff requirements. Students were aware of the opportunities for extra help and also that they were allowed one resit for each module if they failed to reach the progression tariff.

2.44   Students who achieve threshold marks, but fail to make the grades needed for progression to their chosen University programme, may be offered alternatives such as a different course at the partner University or an International Year One programme (leading to second-year university entry) within Study Group. Support in looking for alternative programmes is also available from Study Group.

2.45   In addition to the range of academic and personal support activities documented above, RHISC students have the opportunity to enhance their professional skills. Employability skills have been built into modules and, as indicated above, students have access to the partner University's Passport scheme. Additionally trips are arranged for students to institutions or businesses relevant to their chosen progression programme (for example to local law courts for law students).

2.46   The comprehensive and integrated support described in this section that enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is considered to be **good practice**. 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

2.47   RHISC has a student representative system in place with representatives appointed for each intake. The staff-student committee meets termly; students are invited to QAEG and during 2016-17 will be invited to IFY Monitoring Committee. A Student Representative Handbook has been drafted.

2.48   The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.49   The review team considered documentation including minutes of Staff-Student Committee meetings and the draft Student Representative Handbook for 2016-17. Meetings were also held with the Head of Centre, students and staff.

2.50   All pathways have two or three elected student representatives. Training for the role is offered by the partner University and most attended this. From 2016-17 a clear and informative handbook is available for representatives. Time is offered during lessons for students to meet as a group and discuss anything they wish their representatives to take forward. Social media is also used by representatives to ask for the views of their peers and the minutes of Staff-Student Committee meetings are made available on the VLE. A student representative is elected to chair the meetings and from the minutes it is clear that appropriate issues are brought forward and that a response is made.

2.51   Student representatives are members of QAEG; they are invited to meetings and have copies of agendas and minutes, but do not always attend. In 2015-16 there was no attendance at QAEG by students at all. The importance of QAEG will be emphasised in 2016-17 and student representatives will also be invited to the IFY monitoring committee. Students gave a number of examples of issues raised at the Staff-Student Committee which had led to change.

2.52   Feedback from students is also sought via questionnaires and focus groups at the end of induction and during the year. Staff gave examples of how such feedback had led to change.

2.53   The processes in place allow students to feed back on their experiences and, given the encouragement in the current year for further engagement with governance, the Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

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

2.54   Centre and Student handbooks outline the Assessment Regulations; these indicate how RHISC engages with the Quality Code through processes and procedures that ensure academic standards are set and maintained. Minor and major changes to assessment regulations are managed through RQAEG and AQAEC respectively, and with the HEI through the IFY Monitoring Group.

2.55   Study Group has a set of minimum expectations for assessment. Subject coursework assignments and examinations are produced by RHISC tutors together with marking schemes. The programme approval and monitoring and review process ensures that assessments are mapped to the achievement of learning outcomes (see also section A3.2). English and Skills for University Study (ESUS) assessments are developed centrally across the ISC network. Examination papers are sent to external examiners for approval (see section B7).

2.56   Study Group is implementing a Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Strategy during 2016-17 to enhance the consistency of assessment across the ISC network. A computer-based system (Progresso) is used to track the progression of each student (see section B4), and to store student marks securely and accurately for PABs. Study Group does not recognise prior learning in the assessment of students.

2.57   MABs confirm the accuracy of marks awarded for each student. The PAB confirms the programme outcome for each student, and the Board includes representatives from the partner HEI, together with external examiners, the Head of Centre, Head of English, Academic Lead, and senior subject managers and tutors.

2.58   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.59   To test the arrangements against the Expectation, the review team scrutinised relevant regulations, procedures and processes, assessment information for students and staff in handbooks and other documents, and external examiner reports. The review team also held meetings with students and staff.

2.60   Centre teaching staff use a variety of assessment methods in supporting the curriculum, enhancing subject-specific knowledge and understanding, and in the development of English language skills. The review team heard that assessments are checked internally for relevance to learning outcomes and level before being sent to the external examiner for review. Formative assessment is used to help monitor student progress and engagement and to inform and support improved levels of summative performance. RHISC is working to increase consistency of feedback to students. Feedback in 2015-16 has been timelier, following a recommendation from the Centre Review in 2015. Students were generally very positive about the information provided on assessment, the assessments used and the timely and helpful feedback they received on their work.

2.61   RHISC reviewed the amount, weighting and timing of summative academic module assessments for 2015-16, reducing the amount of assessments being held at the same time. Students commented that assessments were well spaced out.

2.62   RHISC uses Study Group's software system, Progresso, to track each student (see section B4). Students at risk of not progressing meet their tutors to see how this can be addressed. The use of Progresso also ensures marks are stored and reproduced accurately for PABs.

2.63   Penalties for late submission of assignments are set out in the student handbook. Students are given advice on plagiarism and on conduct in formal examinations and penalties are described in their handbook. All written assessments are submitted on the VLE via Turnitin.

2.64   External examiner comments on assessments for 2014-15 and 2015-16 were generally very favourable and included that the standard of assessment was appropriate for the level, and the assessments used reflected a suitable range of skills and knowledge.

2.65   The CAP shows active consideration of assessment issues and the implementation of recommended changes, including on feedback to students, and guidance and CPD for staff on the LTA strategy.

2.66   The review team found that the assessment procedures and processes are effective and robust, and concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.67   The Study Group External Examining Statement is aligned with the Quality Code. External examiners (called 'Visiting Examiners') are nominated by RHISC according to Study Group procedures, and approved by AQAEC. External examiners are sent draft exam papers for their programme for comment and approval. External examiners attend PABs and are invited to visit the Centre prior to the PAB to have the opportunity to scrutinise assessed work. Serious concerns are escalated to Study Group using an Escalation Protocol; all other matters raised by external examiners are considered at RHISC and reported via AMR through RQAEG to AQAEC.

2.68   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.69   The review team tested the external examination process by scrutinising relevant documentation, including external examiner reports and the response to their reports, and at meetings with Centre staff and students.

2.70   There is an external examiner for each IFY pathway, with a separate examiner for the music module (Arts pathway), and for the ESUS module taken on all pathways.

2.71   The review team found that the nomination and appointment process for external examiners at RHISC followed the prescribed procedures. On appointment, external examiners are provided with an outline of the role and responsibilities and the relevant Pathway/Module Handbooks detailing relevant assessment weightings and patterns. Examiner comments on the induction process for new examiners are favourable.

2.72   The external examiner reports seen by the review team were very positive overall. External examiner reports, and the Head of Centre's response to their findings and recommendations, form part of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Responses to external examiner reports are summarised in the Head of Centre Report to QAEG. Any comments, issues or concerns raised by external examiners about marks or assessment processes are overseen by QAEG and entered into the CAP. Relevant comments are disseminated to the Head of English and Academic Lead for discussion and appropriate action with tutors and at the Centre's Curriculum Committee as appropriate. Progress made with the actions is reported by QAEG to AQAEC, via RQAEG.

2.73   Study Group requires all external examiner reports to be made available to students. At RHISC, external examiner reports and the Centre's response are available to students on the VLE, and are discussed at the SSLC with student representatives for dissemination to all students. Information on accessing external examiner reports is in the Student Handbook. New students who met the review team knew where to look for external examiner reports.

2.74   The review team found that RHISC makes good use of external examiners, and 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

2.75   All Study Group-approved provision is subject to annual monitoring, to a review after the first year of operation and to re-approval at least once every five years. In addition there is a periodic Centre Review process by which Study Group seeks, among other things, 'to assure itself that each International Study Centre (ISC) is effectively managing academic standards'. Annual monitoring for the academic year 2015-16 for all approved provision will use a standard Study Group template. Re-approval follows the same process as approval including the use of external panel members.

2.76   The processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.77   Documentation including the Annual Monitoring Report and relating to the Periodic Review/Re-approval Process was reviewed and meetings were held with the Head of Centre.

2.78   The annual monitoring report for 2014-15 was available and covered both quality and standards. It was confirmed by the Head of Centre that the report for 2015-16 will use Study Group's template which, in addition to external examiners' reports and progression figures relating to standards, includes sections on feedback from students via the module review process. There is also an opportunity for the programme leader to reflect on programme delivery. As noted in section A3.1, the Head of Centre explained that they would draft the report, guided by the template; it would then be shared with Centre staff and the partner University before being approved by QAEG. The next stage would be peer review at RQAEG, followed by consideration at Study Group level by AQAEC.

2.79   RHISC was subject to Study Group's Centre Review process in 2015. The outcome made a number of recommendations which have since been implemented.

2.80   The annual monitoring process is in place and other reviews have taken place as appropriate, hence the Expectation is met with low risk.

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

2.81   RHISC academic appeals and complaints procedures are available in the Centre and Student Handbooks. RHISC appeals and complaints procedures are in line with Study Group expectations and have been approved by the partner HEI.

2.82   The procedures in place for academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.83   The review team tested this Expectation by examining documents relating to appeals and complaints, and in meetings with students.

2.84   All ISC appeals and complaints procedures have been examined by Study Group at programme approval and re-approval events, and at HEI validation and revalidation (where appropriate) and at CR. Study Group has developed an Academic-Related Complaints and Appeals Policy with a set of overarching principles and minimum expectations for the Centre network. This was approved at AQAEC in April 2016 and was implemented from the start of the 2016-17 academic year.

2.85   RHISC ensures that students are made aware that academic appeals and complaints procedures are in the Student Handbook. The students who met the review team were all aware of where to find details of how to make an academic appeal or complaint. Details of academic appeals and complaints procedures are also available in the Centre Handbook.

2.86   Study Group has an Admissions Appeals and Complaints process in place, which is managed centrally (see section B2).

2.87   The review team found that there are clear policies and procedures for academic appeals and complaints that are articulated by RHISC to its students, and that the Expectation is thereby met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.89   All nine Expectations in this area are met with low risk. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this section, and three areas of good practice. Two of the good practice elements are situated in Expectation B3 and relate to staff development as well as the systematic enhancement of the curriculum. The third feature of good practice is situated in Expectation B4 and relates to the support available to students.

2.90   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at RHISC is **commended**.

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 quality of the information provided by RHISC online and in hard copy is overseen by Study Group, which requires all ISCs to produce a prescribed set of documents for students and staff. Templates for key documents are provided in the Study Group Academic Quality Handbook. Templates are provided for key documents. In addition to staff and student handbooks, and programme and module specifications, each Centre has its own marketing brochure, which is produced centrally by Study Group and includes information on programmes of study, progression requirements and opportunities, and term dates.

3.2   The Head of RHISC is responsible for the accuracy of the academic content of internally and publicly available information and accountable for the formal review process. All documentation is reviewed and updated annually, or more frequently if, for example, changes to the relevant HEI provision necessitate changes in articulation information. Regional Directors report annually to AQAEC that all documents are in place for each of their Centres.

3.3   The above procedures are designed to ensure that the information provided about the Centre and its education provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4   The review team tested this Expectation by reading a wide range of information produced by and about RHISC, including Centre, Staff and Student Handbooks, module and programme specifications and marketing information. The team discussed the process for ensuring the quality of information with the Centre staff and representatives from Study Group, and the sufficiency, accuracy and accessibility of published information with students.

3.5   RHISC conforms to Study Group expectations on information, having Centre, Student and Staff handbooks, programme and module specifications and a Calendar of Business for the academic year.

3.6   The students who met the review team confirmed the accuracy and usefulness of the information provided to them before application, during the admissions process, and on arrival and subsequent study at RHISC. The Head of Centre confirmed their responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy of published information on academic matters. The Head of Centre works closely with Study Group's Marketing Manager and the partner HEIs to review and update public-facing information to ensure it is accessible, current and relevant. Regional Directors report annually to AQAEC that all documents are in place for all of their ISCs.

3.7   Centre Specifications were developed during 2015-16 to make key information available in one place, and these include information or links to information controlled at Study Group by the Academic Manager. AQAEC monitors the implementation and effectiveness of Centre Specifications through the PAVC.

3.8   The review team were informed that Study Group works with its legal team to ensure that centres produce information for students and prospective students that is compliant with current legislation on Consumer Protection published in the Competition and Markets Authority's advice for HEI providers.

3.9   Overall, the information provided by or about RHISC and its programmes of study is clear, accessible and useful. Information was judged by students and staff accessing it to be helpful and trustworthy. The review team concludes that the Expectation is thereby met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.11   The Expectation in this area is met with low risk. Systems are in place and used to ensure that the quality of information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice in this section.

3.12   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at RHISC **meets** UK expectations.

4   Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   As with all ISCs, a Centre Action Plan is in place and includes actions from Study Group, QAA and the Centre. This action plan is, in the view of the review team, key to a process that ensures deliberate steps are taken with respect to enhancement, that changes introduced are properly evaluated and that good practice is spread between ISCs.

4.2   In the case of RHISC, the team notes in particular the introduction of progression tracking with interventions to support those in danger of failing to progress, leading to better outcomes for students , the introduction of the Welfare Officer providing regular and targeted support for students , the appointment and use of link tutors who are clearly engaging with the Centre and with the curriculum of its programmes , and the further development of the VLE so that it moves from a repository of information to an interactive resource.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   Following a pilot at Sussex ISC, RHISC and other centres across the network are introducing 'CareerAhead', Study Group's employability enhancement project, during 2016-17.

5.2   The approach being taken at RHISC is to embed the 'CareerAhead' programme across the curriculum. The review team heard from Centre staff about a number of initiatives, including the appointment of a member of staff as the 'Employability Lead', who has mapped skills to learning outcomes for all modules, and the promotion of student participation in the HEI's 'Passport Award', where students build up 'points' through various activities and attendance at career-related events.

5.3   Various transferable skills are already imparted to students through meeting the learning outcomes of academic modules. RHISC has a clear focus on encouraging students to develop their English language capabilities so that they can effectively participate in lectures and tutorials. Students develop transferable skills through classroom-based and independent study activities, such as research skills, critical thinking, team-working, presentation skills, time management and IT skills. A priority for RHISC is to look at opportunities within personal tutorials for dedicated sessions on employability. This new initiative will run in tandem with 'CareerAhead'.

5.4   Information on 'CareerAhead' is in module handbooks for 2016-17. Students will complete a Study Group employability questionnaire in January 2017 as part of the 'CareerAhead' project.

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 27 to 29 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](#)

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.

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.