



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Schumacher College (The Dartington Hall Trust)

November 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at [Schumacher College \(The Dartington Hall Trust\)](#). The review took place from 28 to 30 November 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Jonathan Scott
- Professor Anthony Whitehouse.

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

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body
 - the quality of student learning opportunities
 - the information provided about higher education provision
 - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

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.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ 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 QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Schumacher College (The Dartington Hall Trust)

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Schumacher College (The Dartington Hall Trust).

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Schumacher College (The Dartington Hall Trust):

- the well-embedded and mutually supportive partnership between the College and University of Plymouth which enables a distinctive student experience (Expectation A2.1)
- the extensive involvement of visiting UK and international experts who enhance student learning opportunities (Expectation B3)
- the community ethos which provides a highly effective network of informal support structures that enhances students' academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to Schumacher College (The Dartington Hall Trust).

By September 2017:

- extend the peer observation process across and between all programmes to facilitate the sharing of good practice (Expectation B3).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- the steps taken to produce a definitive handbook for the design and development of programmes (Expectation B1)
- the action being taken to formalise the link between assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes to enable students to fully understand the academic requirements of their programme (Expectation B6).

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

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

About Schumacher College (The Dartington Hall Trust)

Schumacher College (the College) opened in 1991 as an initiative of The Dartington Hall Trust, a charity for progressive living and learning which was established in 1925.

The College is situated within the Dartington Hall estate which is close to the town of Totnes in South Devon. The College offers three postgraduate programmes: an MA in Ecological Design Thinking; an MA in Economics for Transition and an MSc in Holistic Science and a range of short and vocationally-based courses.

The College aims to deepen values-based learning through College living, placements, greater applied research opportunities, project incubation and developing the Worldwide Network. This includes: expanding cultural and socio-economic diversity across programmes to underpin the holistic learning experience; establishing a research framework and growing a vibrant applied research community; embedding the Schumacher Worldwide Network to provide greater learning opportunities for students, alumni and friends through collaboration and peer learning; enhancing the learning environment through ecological improvements to the built environment, expansion of renewable energy and food growing and the extension of land-based and craft opportunities; as well as greater involvement with local social initiatives.

The College does not receive public funding and its existence is dependent upon support from The Dartington Hall Trust, student fees and fundraising. The College is the first alternative provider to secure the Chevening Partnership, the UK Government's international awards scheme aimed at developing future global leaders, and the College asserts that the Partnership enhances its ability to widen biocultural and socio-economic participation.

The College has a long-standing partnership with one awarding body, University of Plymouth. In 2015 the College achieved research centre (node) status, this will enable them to develop MRes, MPhil and PhD pathways; providing administrative and academic support for the advancement and supervision of research leading to the award of MRes or MPhil, and doctoral research leading to the award of PhD from the University of Plymouth. This development underpins the College's strategic aims.

The College has 34 full-time and two part-time students who are undertaking postgraduate programmes. There are three full-time and six part-time academic staff. In addition, UK and international experts regularly contribute to programmes.

The College underwent a Review for Educational Oversight (REO) by QAA in December 2012. Since then two significant developments have taken place which include the formal constitution of the College as a research centre with the University of Plymouth and securing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the Chevening Partnership. Other changes include the appointment of a Postgraduate Quality Coordinator and Postgraduate Administrator to enhance and support postgraduate administration and admissions and the commissioning of the Schumacher Worldwide Network to enhance the learning opportunities of students and alumni. In addition the virtual learning environment was further developed to improve accessibility and support for students while also facilitating consistency and version control. Improved inductions for staff, students and student representatives were also put in place.

The key challenges faced by the College are threefold. Firstly attracting students onto programmes, given the high fees charged by the College which take into account the programme delivery model and status of the College. While the College actively fundraises for postgraduate bursaries, students have no access to public funding. This challenge is viewed in the context of increased competition from other UK and non-UK institutions offering similar programmes with the possibility of access to student funding. Secondly, ongoing changes to immigration policy which affect the College's ability to welcome international students and visiting academic staff, coupled with the uncertainties surrounding the UK's future relationship with the rest of Europe. Thirdly, the changing regulatory demands for alternative providers within the higher education sector and the impact of future higher education legislation upon the College.

In the REO in 2012, the review team identified eight areas of good practice and two recommendations, one of which was advisable and the other desirable. The findings of these were summarised in an action plan completed by the College and this was subject to QAA annual monitoring visits in December 2013 and December 2014, which recorded judgements of acceptable and commendable progress respectively. The College has responded effectively to the recommendations of the review and the areas of good practice have been built upon.

Explanation of the findings about Schumacher College (The Dartington Hall Trust)

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 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 The University of Plymouth (the University) is the awarding body for all the award-bearing programmes currently delivered by the College. The responsibilities and processes for the setting and maintenance of academic standards are set out in the University/College responsibilities checklist and are outlined in the Academic Partnership Agreement between the College and the University.

1.2 Alignment with the FHEQ is confirmed by the University at programme approval, which includes mapping against Chapter A1 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The programme approvals are reported to the Academic Board of the University. Programme development templates and processes for programme amendment are defined by the University.

1.3 Programme specifications and definitive module records, following programme approval, are combined to form a Programme Quality Handbook for each programme.

1.4 The processes followed by the College align with those set out by the University as the awarding body and so the design would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team considered how the Expectation was met through review of the self-evaluation document; the University/College responsibilities checklist; exemplar

programme approval documentation; Programme Quality Handbooks; and the report of the Periodic Institutional Review conducted by the University in 2015. The team also met senior College staff and University Faculty Partnership Managers.

1.6 The Review for Educational Oversight (REO) undertaken in 2012 identified the 'mutually supportive partnership' between the University and the College as an area of good practice. Review of the above documentary evidence and meeting with staff enabled the team to conclude that the quality of the partnership is actively maintained by both parties. The team was able to confirm that the College complies with University procedures as evidenced by the exemplar programme approval documentation and report of the institutional review conducted in 2015.

1.7 The threshold standards of the awards for the programmes delivered by the College are confirmed by the University as the awarding body. The evidence base and meeting with staff enabled the review team to confirm the College's compliance with all the University's requirements as the awarding body and therefore the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.8 All the accredited higher education programmes delivered by the College are awards of Plymouth University. The programme templates and specifications for these programmes are approved through the University structures. Ultimate responsibility rests with the Academic Board of the University through the Academic Development and Partnerships Committee as set out in the Academic Partnership Agreement. There are both bi-annual Postgraduate Committee meetings and a Joint Board of Studies to oversee the programmes and consider the College's annual monitoring and action plans. The Joint Board of Studies is chaired by the University's Head of UK Academic Partnerships and membership includes student representation, College staff and Faculty Partnership Managers.

1.9 The College has supported its internal processes for assuring quality through the establishment of a Postgraduate Quality Committee (PQC) whose remit includes 'ensuring consistency and assuring quality across all postgraduate programmes' and a Postgraduate Programme Group, with the remit of monitoring 'the health of the programmes overall and to bring items to a wider audience for attention or discussion'.

1.10 The College has also established a Steering Group, with an advisory role, and the College Strategy Group which has membership from The Dartington Hall Trust and is responsible for developing the strategic direction of the academic portfolio and reviewing the action plans, including quality and enhancement, through the PQC.

1.11 The design of the reporting structures and oversight managed by the University would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team considered how the Expectation was met through review of the self-evaluation document, submitted as part of this review; the University/College responsibilities checklist; exemplar programme approval documentation; exemplar Programme Quality Handbook; the report of the institutional review conducted by the University in 2015; the Academic Partnership Agreement; and minutes of the Joint Board of Studies. The team also explored the Expectation through meetings with staff from the College and Faculty Partnership managers from the University.

1.13 The review team noted that the QAA 2012 review identified the mutually supportive partnership between the College and University as a feature of good practice. The positive nature of the relationship was also reflected on in the Institutional Review conducted by the University in 2015. The team was able to conclude that the reporting structures established by both parties and their operation ensured highly effective governance of the academic awards delivered by the College. Representation by University staff on groups such as the Teaching, Learning and Research Group (TLRG) further strengthens the mutuality of the relationship with the sharing of good practice. This conclusion was confirmed through the meetings with staff from the College and University as well as with the students who, from both perspectives, endorsed the mutually beneficial operation of the relationship. The review team considered the well-embedded and mutually supportive partnership between the

College and the University of Plymouth which enables a distinctive student experience to be **good practice**.

1.14 Based on the review of the evidence regarding the operation of the frameworks between the University and the College and the discussions with staff from both institutions, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.15 The awards for all higher education programmes delivered by the College are accredited by the University. The definitive record for those awards is established through the University collaborative register and Academic Development and Partnerships Committee record. The approval documents are set out using the templates defined by the University and include description of the programme outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment methods. The College compiles a Programme Quality Handbook for each programme following approval, comprising the definitive module records and programme specification. There is also a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook for each programme which sets out the framework for delivery and assessment of the programme. The University requires the College to update its Programme Quality Handbook, Student College and University Handbook and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook annually, using templates that are provided by the University.

1.16 The annual monitoring procedures are defined by University regulations and Institutional Periodic Review is undertaken by the University.

1.17 The oversight maintained by the University and the establishment of the definitive record through the University collaborative register would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team considered how the Expectation was met through review of the self-evaluation document; the University/College responsibilities checklist; approval documentation; exemplar Programme Quality Handbooks and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbooks; and minutes of Joint Board of Studies. These were further tested through meetings with College staff and Faculty Partnership Managers from the University.

1.19 The documentary evidence of the record maintained by the University; the approval documentation with sign-off by the Academic Development Partnerships Committee; the minutes of the Joint Board of Studies; the programme handbooks; the operation of the Institutional Periodic Review; and the meeting with staff from both the College and University enabled the review team to conclude that the processes in place operate effectively to assure the provision of a definitive record of the programmes.

1.20 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk is low on the basis of the detailed oversight of the programmes by the University and the holding of the definitive records by the University as the awarding body.

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 Responsibility for the approval of programmes, including ensuring engagement with relevant external frameworks and standards, and for making the award, lies with the University. The University's Academic Board holds ultimate responsibility for the design, development, annual review and overall academic management of programmes which it approves. At the College, programmes are discussed and agreed at strategic level by the College Steering Group. The College is responsible for submitting the structure and design of programmes to the University for approval and validation.

1.22 The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.23 The team reviewed the written and digital evidence, met a range of staff from the College, University representatives and students, in order to confirm the processes are effective.

1.24 Responsibility for the delivery and operation of the programmes lies with the College, as set out in the agreement with the University and in the approved definitive programme documents. The University's Joint Board of Studies, together with programme planning and review meetings, are held by the University to discuss quality and operational issues.

1.25 The College follows the University Assessment Policy and arrangements for the assessment of students are set out in the University approved definitive documents. University monitoring ensures programmes are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations and that UK threshold standards for the qualification are met. Monitoring is managed by Academic Partnerships; supported by the Relationship Development Manager, Faculty Partnership Managers and Link Tutors, the University's annual Joint Board of Studies, and bi-annual Postgraduate Committee Meetings. Assessment is overseen by a University appointed external examiner. The University holds Subject and Award Boards at which external examiners are present in order to confirm and ensure standards are maintained.

1.26 Externality is addressed by the College through the use of study trips, external speakers, student placements, live case studies and by the organisation of conferences and practitioner-led workshops.

1.27 The University monitors and reviews the delivery and operation of programmes through a formal committee structure, including subject and award boards, and such oversight of the process enables the review team to conclude that the Expectation is met with the associated level of risk 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 The University's approval process and Academic Partnership Agreement requires the College to provide a definitive module record. The record contains a detailed description of each credit-bearing element of the approved programme, including module aims, assessed learning outcomes, indicative syllabus, assessment mode and criteria and indicative reading. To meet this requirement the College provides Programme Quality Handbooks and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbooks for each programme.

1.29 The College follows the University assessment process and details are provided in the programme handbooks.

1.30 The University appoints external examiners to ensure assessments meet University and UK threshold standards.

1.31 The process in place enables the Expectation to be met.

1.32 The review team scrutinised the written and digital evidence and met a range of staff, including University representatives and students, in order to confirm the processes are effective.

1.33 College procedures together with the University monitoring and review procedure ensure the process is effective. College staff design assessments to ensure students are able to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Review and evaluation of assessments and their suitability is undertaken by academic staff.

1.34 External examiners attend Subject and Award Boards and their reports confirm students satisfy University standards for the award.

1.35 Programme Committee meetings, which include student representatives, consider a wide range of issues including assessment and external examiner comments, leading to agreed actions. The University review process also considers external examiners' reports, College responses, annual programme monitoring outcomes, action plans, and minutes of Programme Committee meetings.

1.36 The review team considers that effective oversight by the University and its appointed external examiners ensures the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.37 The Academic Partnership Agreement confirms the University Academic Board is responsible for the monitoring and review of all approved programmes offered by the College. The Programme Committee is the functional authority for delivery, development and review of teaching, learning and assessment. The University requires a Programme Coordinator to be appointed by the College who is responsible to the University for the day-to-day management and delivery of each approved programme at the College.

1.38 The College maintains a strategic overview of the design, development and approval of new programmes. New or revised programmes are considered at the College Strategy Group, discussed informally with the University and reported to the Joint Board of Studies.

1.39 Annual monitoring is overseen by the Joint Board of Studies and at meetings of the University Academic Development and Partnership Committee.

1.40 The design of the process and the arrangements in place enable the Expectation to be met.

1.41 The review team scrutinised the evidence, including all further evidence requested, held meetings with relevant College staff, students and University representatives.

1.42 The University is responsible, through its programme approval and monitoring process, for ensuring programmes meet both the UK threshold and University academic standards and holds examination boards to confirm standards have been met for their awards. The most recent periodic review by the University stated it was confident that the quality and standards of the University's awards were being maintained.

1.43 During the design of programmes, College staff ensure programmes are current and at the relevant academic level through discussions with external subject experts and University staff. Minor changes to programmes follow a formal process and are reported to the Joint Board of Studies. Staff at all levels demonstrated an understanding of the processes and their roles within these.

1.44 The College makes effective use of its internal processes which, together with the strong University partnership, ensures programmes meet the UK threshold academic standards and the standards for awards made by the University. Therefore the review team concludes 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

1.45 The University's validation process involves the use of external and independent experts. Ideas for new, or revisions to, programmes are identified through the extensive links College staff have within the sector. These include the use of external specialist speakers, international visits and international conferences organised by the College.

1.46 In consultation with University staff, the College produces validation documents enabling the University to be satisfied programmes align with UK threshold academic standards. A University validation panel considers the proposed programme to ensure the academic standards are appropriate and can be maintained to meet the requirements for the awards made by the University.

1.47 The University appoints external examiners in order to ensure University academic standards are met. External examiners are required to complete an extensive University pro forma to which the College is required to append their response. The completed report is then returned to the external examiner and also posted on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.48 The procedures in place enable the Expectation to be met.

1.49 The team examined all the evidence provided by the College, and during meetings with College staff and University representatives explored the use of the procedures.

1.50 The process is effective and meets the requirements of the University. Academic standards are overseen by the Faculty Partnership Managers, with the support of University link tutors and by the University appointed external examiners.

1.51 Independent expertise is used during programme design and by the University validation process. Minutes of meetings, which include staff and students, clearly indicate discussions are held within the College to consider both new programmes and revisions to existing programmes. All proposals are then subject to the University approval processes.

1.52 Monitoring reports by the University commended the 'positive engagement with external partners which enhances the learning opportunities available to the participants within their programmes'. External speakers are used to deliver specific parts of modules and to conduct workshops.

1.53 The University panel review report concluded that the programmes 'not only remain current and valid but deliberately position themselves as leaders in holistic science and its application'. The most recent University review identified a number of areas of good practice including 'the contemporary and radical nature of the programmes and the curriculum'.

1.54 The College considers and implements suggestions made by external examiners regarding learning, teaching and assessment. Actions planned or taken as a result of external examiner recommendations are noted in the programme-level action plan for each programme and discussed at the PQC Meeting and bi-annual Postgraduate Committee Meetings. Minutes are uploaded to the open area of the virtual learning environment (VLE) for dissemination to the wider student body.

1.55 College staff demonstrated a clear understanding of their role in assuring academic standards.

1.56 The review team concludes that the level of independent and external expertise, together with the close collaboration with University staff, assures academic standards are appropriately set and maintained. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.58 All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low in all cases. The review team identified one area of good practice under Expectation A2.1. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this area.

1.59 The approach to maintaining academic standards at the College is defined by the degree-awarding body. The College uses the established University academic frameworks, regulations and procedures. Staff are familiar with the responsibilities that are assigned to the College with regards to academic standards and there is significant external engagement and oversight of standards through the awarding body and through the use of external examiners.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

- 2.1 Responsibility for the design and development of programmes rests with the College. Suggestions for new programmes, or revisions to programmes, are received from staff, alumni, external examiners and external practitioners.
- 2.2 The College discusses these proposals at the College Strategy Group, then seeks advice from its University partner and reports the proposed programme to the Joint Board of Studies. Documentation to meet University requirements is then developed for submission to the University validation process
- 2.3 The College developed a process to gather input from a range of experts in order to inform the content and structure of programmes.
- 2.4 The University Academic Board holds ultimate responsibility for the design and development, annual review and academic management for programmes leading to University awards.
- 2.5 The process of design enables the Expectation to be met.
- 2.6 The team scrutinised the evidence and explored the operation of the process with senior staff, teaching staff and University Faculty Partnership Managers.
- 2.7 The process is operationally effective; however, the College has identified the need to produce a definitive handbook for the design and development of programmes. The review team therefore **affirms** the steps taken to produce a definitive handbook for the design and development of programmes.
- 2.8 Currently, the College Strategy Group is responsible for evaluating proposals for new programmes and a recently formed PQC has been set up to 'review, communicate and disseminate administrative practice and policy; ensuring consistency and assuring quality across all Postgraduate Programmes and a formal agreement process for new policy documents'. Evidence of market demand is required before programmes are developed into a validation document for submission to the University approval process.
- 2.9 Postgraduate programmes delivered at the College are subject to approval by the University and proposed changes to programmes are discussed and approved at the University Planning and Review meetings. Minor changes may be made in discussion with the University link tutor and Faculty Partnership Manager and then reported to the Joint Board of Studies.
- 2.10 Following approval, the programme specification and definitive module records are combined to form a Programme Quality Handbook and a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook. These handbooks are provided to students, staff and external

examiners. Handbooks include University definitive module records which contain aims, learning outcomes and forms of assessment.

2.11 Overall management of the process is through Academic Partnerships; supported by the Relationship Development Manager, Faculty Partnership Managers and Link Tutors. and the Annual Joint Board of Studies, and Postgraduate Committee, which meets twice yearly, and are part of the University's process for annual review and programme monitoring. The College maintains a record of the internal and external approval process for programmes.

2.12 The College VLE contains teaching and learning documentation to support learning opportunities. A digital Quality Store is being developed as the single repository for all College documents and to which staff and students will have access.

2.13 The review team concludes that with University oversight the College has appropriate processes for programme design, development and approval. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.14 Since 2014, the Postgraduate Quality Coordinator has been responsible for oversight of admissions. In 2016 the College introduced a new Admissions Policy which was reviewed by the PQC and was also submitted to the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Group (SPA) for approval leading to amendments for 2017 entry guidance.

2.15 Information on how to apply to the College, including the required qualifications and information regarding fees, is available on the website, along with an international student page. Prospective applicants can also attend an open day, or join a short residential programme as an introduction to the College.

2.16 Where possible, two members of staff review each application and interview eligible applicants.

2.17 There is an admissions appeals process in place with appeals being accepted on procedural grounds, but unsuccessful applicants may request individual feedback regarding their application.

2.18 The College provides additional support and guidance to international applicants, who come under Tier 4 legislation, in order to facilitate the process of obtaining a visa. There is also a bursary scheme available, in the form of a reduction in tuition fees, based on reviews of applicants' individual circumstances by the Bursary Panel.

2.19 In the self-evaluation document the College sets out some of the developments for enhancing the processes: 'We are implementing an annual process for monitoring the effectiveness of the admission cycle, including the review of this policy. Feedback from each new cohort of students on ways to enhance the student admissions experience or information is sought at the beginning of each academic year'.

2.20 The Admissions Policy and its internal and external review as set out in the self-evaluation document, the associated documentation and website information would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.21 The review team considered the self-evaluation document, information provided through the website, the Admissions Policy and specific information provided to international students. The team also discussed the experience of the admissions process with students and staff.

2.22 The team considered that the website provides full details of the nature of the College, the educational philosophy and details of the programmes offered; as well as guidance regarding the application process for both home and international students. Specific guidance is provided for Tier 4 students regarding visa requirements.

2.23 The Admissions Policy sets out all stages of the process and identifies the loci of responsibility within the College and the oversight maintained by the University. The expectations of the Policy and of the agreed engagements between the student,

the College and the University are set out in a tripartite contract. The review by SPA has provided the College with an external benchmark against which to evaluate its processes. The students confirmed that the information provided regarding admissions was clear and accurate and that they had felt supported by both academic and support staff, though some felt that the level of required engagement with the community activities was not fully explained. All the students the team met had been interviewed and had been clear as to the purpose of the interview, finding the process beneficial. They also valued the pre-arrival engagement with the programme and with other students as a means of facilitating transition.

2.24 The review team concludes that the admissions information and guidance and the associated processes were clearly set out and underpinned by appropriate oversight. The Expectation is therefore met and the risk 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

2.25 The College's Interim Strategy (2015-20) sets out the vision for the educational provision, underpinned by the Teaching, Learning and Research Strategy (2016-20). These define the College's approach to pedagogy as being 'rooted in principles of whole person, transformative learning', with a clear focus on 'place-based' learning. Place-based learning is supported by the use of indoor and outdoor classrooms and field trips. In the QAA 2012 review, the College's 'use of the physical learning resources for the full benefit of students' was recognised as good practice.

2.26 The College sets out the aim to take 'deliberate steps to engage participants and other stakeholders in the enhancement of opportunities to continually position the College in the avant-garde of teaching and learning'.

2.27 Delivery of teaching and an overview of the assessment structures are set out in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbooks, with supplementary material in a learning guide given at the beginning of each module where required. The College records class sessions and uploads these daily to a secure, programme specific site. Recordings are uploaded within 24 hours. In 2016-17 the College extended this practice to all encompass all Postgraduate programmes running at the College. These recordings are supplemented by audio-visual resources on the YouTube channel and on the VLE, which have been developed from the short courses and previous years' lectures, including the Earth Talks series of lectures. Each programme also has a budget allocation to host external speakers and symposia.

2.28 Student learning is further supported by tutorials and students are encouraged to submit drafts of assessments for formative feedback. Students are also encouraged to engage in ongoing discussions with staff throughout the academic year.

2.29 The College has in place a number of mechanisms for supporting the development of teaching practice by the staff. In 2013-14 the College instituted a Teaching and Learning Group, which was subsequently expanded to include research as well. The remit of the Teaching, Learning and Research Group (TLRG) includes ensuring the quality of teaching, learning and research, enhancing the quality of the provision and standards, and supporting and coordinating staff development. The membership of the Group includes representation from the University to enable wider sharing of practice. The Group meets monthly, with written summaries of the discussions that are reported to the Teaching, Learning and Research Committee (TLRC).

2.30 The College introduced an annual peer-to-peer review scheme in 2013-14 which is in place for every academic staff member, with the aim of identifying development and training needs and sharing good practice. The College also operates an annual continuing professional development (CPD) planning exercise with associated funding for each member of staff to enable them to engage with external activities.

2.31 Staff development is further supported through engagement with the University and the availability of the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, with the intention that this should be undertaken by all staff on a rolling basis. Staff are also being supported in the development of supervisory skills through workshops and engagement with University training programmes. Developmental action plans are established at programme level and for individual staff.

2.32 New staff appointments are approved by the Academic Partnerships and Development Committee of the University. Staff receive induction programmes to both the College and The Dartington Hall Trust. Support and mentoring are further provided by the Postgraduate Quality Coordinator, the Programme Coordinator and programme leaders.

2.33 The strategic objectives of the College in supporting a distinct learning experience should be supported by the structures in place, while approaches to the delivery of teaching as well as the staff development activities would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.34 The review team tested the Expectation through detailed review of the self-evaluation document and associated documentation, including the Teaching, Learning and Research Strategy (2016-2020); Teaching and Learning and Programme Handbooks; records of the meetings of TLRG and TLRC and exemplar staff development records. The team also reviewed online resources through the VLE and the lists of visiting speakers. These reviews were cross-referred through meetings with staff and students and a demonstration of the use of the VLE from both a staff and student perspective.

2.35 In meeting with staff and students, the team was able to confirm the underpinning of the ethos of the College and its approach to living in learning. Place-based learning emphasised an appreciation of students and staff as peer learners who participate in a dialogue to explore ideas through different conversations in different environments. The review team considered that this approach facilitated the development of the students as learners and allowed them to explore the subjects in depth.

2.36 Review of the notes of the meetings of the TLRG enabled confirmation of the stated operation of the Group to consider pedagogic practice within the College and with sharing of approaches from the University. The reports to the TLRC, which in turn feed through to the Postgraduate Programme Group (PPG), provide evidence of consideration of pedagogic developments and their incorporation into practice at each stage.

2.37 The review team was provided with examples of staff development activities including peer-to-peer observation records and a CPD plan and log for one member of staff. There is a list of CPD activities for staff, indicating how funding had been allocated. The observation records contained detailed reflections from the reviewee regarding the discussion with the reviewer and specific identification of their learning points. The records also contained points for dissemination of good practice though it was not clear how these would be taken forward. The CPD plan and log for the member of staff and the overall list of CPD listed a range of activities planned and undertaken but no reflection on the rationale for the activities or learning points derived from those undertaken. In the meetings with the Head of the College and with staff it was clear that there was no specific strategic direction for CPD activities but the team was informed that there was a balance between top-down direction, including the development of supervisory capacity and engagement with the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, and individual responsibility for identifying developmental activities, which were subsequently reported on to colleagues. It was also confirmed that all teaching staff, including those on part-time contracts, had access to CPD funding on a pro rata basis.

2.38 From the review of the peer-to-peer observation records and discussion with staff, the team learnt that the observations were operated within the individual programmes.

Given the small numbers of staff, this resulted in pairs of staff repeatedly observing each other within a single programme over a number of years. This narrow approach was also evidenced in the student submission, which noted that '... the staff could be less siloed and more coherent and cohesive'. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College should extend the peer observation process across and between all programmes to facilitate the sharing of good practice.

2.39 New members of teaching staff have a one-to-one meeting with the Head of College, and Programme Coordinators are responsible for the induction and support of all new staff to their programme. The Postgraduate Quality Coordinator is responsible for an induction to the quality cycle and administrative processes.

2.40 The review team also scrutinised the extensive lists of visiting speakers, some of whom were programme alumni and now working as practitioners, who brought external expertise to the programmes and facilitated the exchange of ideas and maintenance of programme currency. The meetings with students and staff confirmed the significant perceived benefit of widening the scope of the programmes through such a wide-range of expertise. The review team considered the extensive involvement of visiting UK and international experts who enhance student learning opportunities to be **good practice**.

2.41 The review team concludes that the College is delivering programmes that support student learning through critical engagement and exposure to a wide range of ideas. Furthermore, there is an active programme of staff development based on both top-down direction and individual identification of opportunity supported by the College's funding opportunities. Therefore the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.42 The 2012 QAA report identified as a feature of good practice, the College's 'holistic, developmental and student-centred approach to learning and teaching'. Since then, student learning support has been further strengthened by several new roles including a Volunteer Coordinator, Postgraduate Teaching Support Volunteer and Community Coordinator. Likewise, information technology (IT) support and development has been strengthened by the appointment of a member of staff with responsibility for the support and development of the VLE. As well as the local College library, which is supported by two volunteer part-time librarians, the students have full access to the library resources at the University.

2.43 Once students have been accepted onto the programmes they are given early access to their programme site on the VLE to facilitate initial familiarisation with the programme structure and to enable engagement with the cohort prior to arrival.

2.44 All students (new and returning) are given inductions to the College and their programmes, a key addition being the process of welcome and hand-over given by members of the previous cohort. The induction programme also includes an introduction to the facilities at the University and a meeting with the link tutor (Academic Liaison) of each programme. The general inductions are followed by specific inductions into the programmes.

2.45 The Programme Coordinators have overall responsibility for student development and achievement within their programmes with both pastoral and academic oversight. Students are also supported, both in their studies and on a pastoral basis, by a recent alumnus acting as Postgraduate Teaching Support Volunteer. Academic support is further provided through the policy of allowing students to submit initial drafts of assignments to receive formative feedback prior to the summative assessment. In 2014 the College introduced a voluntary Research Studies Fortnight to assist students in the selection and initial preparation for their dissertations; engagement with this has increased from 50 per cent in 2014 to 80 per cent in 2016.

2.46 Home and EU students with declared disabilities can seek advice from and access support via 'Disability Assist' at the University. They are also assisted in gaining access by the Postgraduate Quality Coordinator. Following the changes in Disabled Student Allowance funding, the College has also established a disability budget to provide additional support, with decisions regarding funding allocations being taken by the newly formed Reasonable Adjustments Review Panel.

2.47 The Postgraduate Quality Coordinator also supports international students and there is specific guidance on the webpages in relation to the regulatory frameworks around Tier 4 visas. Language support is provided by the English Language Centre at the University. The self-evaluation document and student submission indicated that the students had perceived some shortcomings in English language support. The College has been aware of these issues and negotiated a revised schedule of support. Amendments were noted within the revised Academic Partnership Agreement.

2.48 College handbooks and the VLE include guidance regarding the procedures for extenuating circumstances, complaints and appeals and also academic integrity.

These are all managed through the University and there are links to the relevant sites on the University website.

2.49 The College operates an internal bursary scheme to provide financial support for students who could not otherwise afford the fees, which is managed by a Bursary Panel, including all the Programme Coordinators. Financial support for international students also benefits significantly as a result of the College having achieved Chevening Partnership status, being the first alternative provider to achieve this recognition.

2.50 The support frameworks, including the induction programme which provides induction both to the College and the University, the structure of pastoral and academic support and the provision of support for disabled and international students would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.51 The team tested the Expectation through consideration of the self-evaluation document, the student submission and the College website. Specific documentation was also reviewed including handbooks published by the College; the Postgraduate Teaching Support Volunteer Agreement; the induction timetable; the Academic Partnership Agreement; bursary and disability support; and the Chevening Scholarship scheme. These aspects were further explored through the meetings with students and academic and support staff.

2.52 The review of the documentation provided evidenced a very supportive framework designed to facilitate student progression to the College, their induction and their subsequent academic journey. The student submission noted as a particular feature 'the unique opportunity at Schumacher to engage with staff personally'.

2.53 In the meeting with students, the team was informed that the information prior to arrival and the induction programme were viewed very positively, with particular appreciation of the opportunity to talk to tutors during the application process. The students considered that the induction covered all aspects of the College as well as the specific induction to the programmes. They also appreciated the induction programme at the University where they were shown how to access all the facilities and met their respective link tutors. International students further welcomed the support given in relation to dealing with visa requirements.

2.54 The students value the pastoral support given by the Programme Coordinators and also the Postgraduate Teaching Support Volunteer. In the latter case, they observed that she was always available and provided valuable support in relation to personal and emotional issues. The students also noted that some of the programmes provided Learning Assistants, who were present in the classes to support student learning and they felt it would be beneficial to widen this role across the whole College. The students also valued the opportunity to receive formative feedback on draft assignments.

2.55 The self-evaluation document and student submission indicated that the students had perceived some shortcomings in English language support. The College was made aware of this issue in June 2016 and negotiated a revised schedule of support in partnership with the English Language Centre at the University for the 2017-18 academic year. The team noted that there were resources available on the VLE, which linked across to the support services at the University. Furthermore, staff at the University had responded to the student feedback by establishing a programme of visits to the College along with the capacity to provide one-to-one support for English language and academic writing.

2.56 Review of the website materials, Programme Quality Handbooks and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbooks enabled the team to confirm that the students received detailed information and guidance regarding the structure of their programmes. The documentation also contained effective guidance regarding the operation of the

schemes for mitigating circumstances, disability support, lodging complaints or appeals and the policies regarding academic integrity; and students and staff were clear regarding their operation. The provision of a wide range of learning resources, in particular the range of recorded materials, access to the University Library and the input from the external speakers (see also Expectation B3) was seen as being effective in supporting the student learning journey.

2.57 In the meeting with students it was made very clear that students greatly valued the extent and quality of the support they received, the structure of the teaching and the community ethos which allowed them formal and extensive informal opportunities for discussion with the tutors. Combined with the review team's observations of the Postgraduate Teaching Support Volunteer role and the documentary guidance, the team was able to identify the community ethos which provides a highly effective network of informal support structures that enhances students' academic, personal and professional potential as **good practice**.

2.58 On the basis of the range of both academic and pastoral support the College has put in place to facilitate the students' progression, the access to physical and virtual resources and the feedback from the students regarding their overall appreciation of that support, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.59 The College identifies student engagement as at the heart of maintaining and enhancing College standards and states it is dedicated to enhancing inquiry and practice as the foundation for the student learning experience.

2.60 All formal meetings of the Postgraduate Programmes Group; Programme Committee and the Joint Board of Studies include student representation. Student representatives are elected from each programme group and trained within the College and the University.

2.61 All students are provided with an induction to the quality assurance process with student representatives receiving further training facilitated by the Postgraduate Quality Coordinator.

2.62 Student representatives also benefit from an induction, led by the University Student Union, to enhance their understanding and to raise awareness of the opportunities for academic, personal and professional enhancement available from the University.

2.63 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.64 Scrutiny of the evidence led to requests for further evidence all of which was explored and clarified at meetings with staff and students.

2.65 Meetings with students confirmed they were fully involved at informal and formal organisational levels and the training they received for their role was useful and effective. They highlighted that the College had offered to set up a student council to facilitate student engagement, although students felt that this was not required.

2.66 Feedback from students is fed into programme action plans, and minutes of meetings demonstrate full involvement of students. Changes are made to programmes in response to students' comments.

2.67 The College seeks to provide a high quality student learning experience which they believe has led to their strong completion and retention rates of 94 per cent and 90 per cent respectively.

2.68 Feedback from students was used by the College TLRG to work in collaboration with students to develop the Teaching, Learning and Research Strategy to 'better underpin and communicate the pedagogical approach of the College'. Students were involved with staff in a pedagogy mapping workshop to produce a wide debate on pedagogy.

2.69 Students are involved in discussions regarding actions to be taken on reports received from external examiners, with minutes of meetings placed on the College VLE for all students to access. On most programmes students have met and held discussions with the external examiners for their programmes.

2.70 Both summative and formative feedback is highly valued by students and external examiners consistently comment on the excellent feedback provided to students.

2.71 Students felt support from tutors, with the Postgraduate Quality Coordinator and the volunteer alumni support considered excellent. The College is also working with students to develop a value-based student charter.

2.72 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met through the deliberate steps taken by the College to engage all students in their educational experience and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.73 The College's overall approach to assessment is 'to follow the guidelines provided by the University of Plymouth'. General guidelines on assessment are contained in the Student College and University Handbook and the type of assessment to be used for each module is described in each programme's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook.

2.74 Assessments for each module are set and marked by College tutors with dissertations marked by first and second supervisors.

2.75 The College follows the University marking and moderation policy and internal verification is carried out by programme leaders. External examiners have the opportunity to comment on the nature of assignments and to sample marked work.

2.76 The University holds examination boards for both subject progression and for final awards, at which the University link tutor and external examiner are present.

2.77 Testing for plagiarism is not routine but the College states that it 'may use detection software on a selected number of modules this academic year'.

2.78 Students are not able to apply for exemption from any module through any form of recognition of prior learning process. This exemption to University regulations was obtained by the College for all programmes in recognition of the importance of the student learning journey at the College. The student learning journey is varied and includes monthly community meetings; opportunities for everyone at the College to share in a joint activity, for example apple pressing in the autumn, and an open meeting to discuss life at the College including issues, opportunities and experiences. The daily community volunteer work groups include students, which creates opportunities for different qualities of conversation between students and staff.

2.79 The arrangements and processes in place for assessment would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.80 The written evidence was scrutinised by the review team and explored with staff, students and University representatives at a number of meetings. In addition, a sample of marked student work was reviewed by the team.

2.81 An effective process is assured through the scrutiny of assessments and a sample of marked work by a University appointed external examiner who provides a report to the University. The College follows the University regulations for assessment, marking and moderation.

2.82 Assessments are designed and set by College tutors to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Assessment for each module is articulated in the programme Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbooks.

2.83 Each module, including any formal placement, is assessed through subject-specific coursework. Due to the nature of the subject staff reported that module assessment is often negotiated with students, ensuring the intended learning outcomes can be met.

2.84 Students have expressed difficulty in relating learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The College has recognised the need for more clarity in the information provided to students regarding assessment criteria and grade descriptors and a new marking rubric is being trialled which contains more explicit assessment criteria and complete grade descriptors. The review team therefore **affirms** the action being taken to formalise the link between assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes to enable students to fully understand the academic requirements of their programme.

2.85 The review team viewed a sample of marked work which demonstrated marking is carried out by two tutors, using grade descriptors, with moderation carried out by a third marker as required. All assessed work is submitted by students through the College VLE.

2.86 Students confirmed they were able to discuss what was expected of them in order to complete assignments successfully and to submit a draft assignment for formative feedback. They felt the summative and the formative feedback was timely and assisted their learning.

2.87 Students are informed about academic offences and plagiarism in the Student College and University Handbook, which includes advice to access further information on the University website. The document also informs students that plagiarism software may be used on modules during the 2016-17 academic year. Students confirmed they were fully aware of academic misconduct and they would be informed which modules had to be submitted to detection software.

2.88 Due to the subject matter, many assessments are individual and original pieces of work which are negotiated between the student and tutor. Where necessary the College is guided by University policy to use originality checking software 'to assist students to develop good academic practice'.

2.89 Subject and award examination boards are held by the University to assure the standard of assessments.

2.90 The review team concludes that with oversight by the University link tutor and University appointed external examiner, the College's processes for assessment are equitable, valid and reliable. The Expectation is therefore 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

2.91 External examiners are nominated by the College for consideration and approval by the University External Examiner Subcommittee. The College Programme Coordinators identify and nominate external examiners who are able to bring an independence of perspective and a duty of objectivity. The external examiners are then selected for their expertise and experience in their particular field of study. External examiners are appointed for a period no greater than four academic years, in alignment with University policies.

2.92 The University appoints external examiners to ensure that assessment standards for the programmes are satisfied in accordance with the FHEQ, the relevant programme handbooks and the University's programme and module specifications.

2.93 The responsibilities, duties, training and support of external examiners is provided by the University and the College publishes the name, position and institution of each external examiner in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbooks.

2.94 The University provides report templates for each external examiner to complete and return directly to the University. External examiner reports and responses are available on the VLE and these reports are considered by the University at the Joint Board of Study meeting.

2.95 These arrangements and processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.96 The review team considered a range of documentation when testing this Expectation including external examiner reports. The team also held meetings with a range of staff and students, which included a demonstration of the VLE by a tutor and by a student.

2.97 The process is effectively managed to ensure University regulations are followed. Each College Programme Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the external examiner understands the key features of the University's external examining system. The Programme Coordinator is also responsible for supporting the external examiner in fulfilling their duties and organises an initial meeting to discuss the programme in further detail, arranges interim visits and shares the annual programme monitoring process. A section of the University website provides appropriate induction and support to newly appointed external examiners including a checklist for subject briefing of external examiners.

2.98 External examiners complete their reports using a University template and e-mail the report to Academic Partnerships at the University who upload it to an internal University external examiner website. The University then requires the College to complete the 'response to external examiners' section within four weeks of receipt. The College return the report and response to the external examiner and Academic Partnerships and upload it to the College VLE for dissemination to the wider student body.

2.99 Actions planned or taken as a result of external examiner recommendations are noted in the programme-level action plan for each programme and discussed within the PQC and reported on at the bi-annual Postgraduate Committee meeting. Programme Committee meetings are attended by student representatives and minutes uploaded to the open area of the VLE for dissemination to the wider student body.

2.100 External examiners meet with students and include any issues or suggestions in their report. For example, students felt there was a lack of clarity in assessment criteria and were unclear about marking of the intended learning outcomes, which the College accepted and acted upon (see also Expectation B6).

2.101 External examiner reports seen by the review team are positive, particularly on feedback to students, with no concerns identified. Students confirmed that external examiners' reports are available on the VLE.

2.102 The College makes full use of external examiners, and together with the management of the process by the University allows the review team to conclude 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

2.103 The College undertakes annual monitoring in line with the University's requirements and is subject to periodic review undertaken by the University. Policies and procedures for Annual Monitoring, Planning and Review of Taught Provision are set out and overseen by the University, and the College is responsible for ensuring these processes are applied systematically and consistently through a formal committee structure.

2.104 Programme Coordinators are responsible for producing programme reviews with actions embedded in the action plan for submission to the Postgraduate Programme Committee meetings and to the University chaired Joint Board of Studies.

2.105 The operational health of each programme of study is monitored by the College PPG, which meets twice each month.

2.106 The College PQC reviews, communicates and disseminates practice and policy; ensuring consistency and assuring quality across all postgraduate programmes delivered at the College.

2.107 These arrangements and processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.108 The Expectation was tested through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The review team also held meetings with students, teaching staff, programme leaders and awarding body representatives.

2.109 University oversight ensures the process is effective and students are involved in the formal committee structure. The University carried out a periodic review in May 2015 covering the previous four years. The report highlighted a number of areas of good practice and the University panel confirmed they were satisfied the quality and standards of the University's awards were being maintained.

2.110 Annual reviews of each programme delivered by the College are carried out and a report written by a University Faculty Partnership Manager for meetings of the Joint Board of Studies. The report is directed by a University pro forma and includes responses to previous action plans and identifies any further actions required. Reports seen by the review team confirm the College continues to meet University expectations.

2.111 The College Programme Committee meets twice yearly and this forms part of the University's process for annual review and programme monitoring. This committee engages with a wide range of information sources, as detailed within the University's current quality and standards assurance process for annual monitoring of partnership programmes.

2.112 Action plans are updated throughout the academic year and are submitted to the Academic Partnerships following each Postgraduate Committee Meeting, held twice yearly.

2.113 The Postgraduate Committee receives feedback for each module from staff, students and external examiners, which are considered and fed into action plans.

2.114 Programme Committee meeting minutes demonstrate discussion on a variety of issues including reviews of programmes, updates and progress on action plans, and the student experience.

2.115 A Programme Quality Committee was formed in February 2016 and minutes of meetings also indicate a range of issues affecting programme management and development are discussed and actions agreed.

2.116 The College has recognised the need for a formalised process for Internal Programme Review; this is being planned for development in the 2016-17 Academic Year.

2.117 The review team concludes that University oversight and close cooperative working between the University and the College enables the Expectation to be met and the associated level of 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

2.118 The Academic Partnership Agreement with the University requires students of the College to submit complaints and appeals directly to the University. University regulations specify a three-stage process for making a complaint or an appeal; the procedures are provided in the Student College and University handbook and are on the University website.

2.119 The first stage of the process recommends a student to raise any issues or problems with their tutor or an alternative member of staff at the College. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved stage two may be invoked by making a formal complaint to the University using a specified complaints email address.

2.120 The College also operates an appeal process for any candidate who is not offered a place during the admission process.

2.121 These procedures and processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.122 The review team scrutinised the written evidence and held meetings with staff and students to clarify their knowledge and operation of the procedures.

2.123 The College operates an effective and comprehensive Admissions Policy which specifies the responsibilities of College staff and of applicants. Applicants who are not offered a place on a programme have the opportunity to obtain feedback on their application.

2.124 The Student College and University handbook contains a link to the University website which provides full details of the procedures for registering and taking forward any complaint a student may have relating to any aspect of the academic performance of the College or any of its staff.

2.125 Students confirmed they were made aware of the procedures for making complaints and appeals during their induction. They also confirmed they were able to discuss and have issues quickly resolved by their tutor or by the Postgraduate Quality Coordinator, who keeps records of complaints.

2.126 Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate the procedures are used including one complaint which went to, and was rejected by, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.127 The review team concludes that the College operates fair, appropriate and freely available procedures for handling appeals and complaints. Therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.128 The College operates a small number of three-week placements as part of one module for the MA in Ecological Design Thinking. A revised Placement Agreement Policy was put in place from June 2016, which sets out the expectations of the arrangements for both the College and the placement provider, including establishment of risk assessments. There is a formal agreement that is signed off by the student, the College and the placement provider.

2.129 The students are supported during the placement through weekly meetings, which are managed as face-to-face or by videoconferencing. The College evaluates the outcomes of each placement in terms of the students' experience and the placement providers' feedback.

2.130 Following completion of the placement, students are required to write a placement report or give a presentation as part of the formal assessment for the module.

2.131 The policy, process of placement development and the support frameworks that the College has put in place would enable the Expectation in respect of placement provision to be met.

2.132 The review team examined the module descriptors and a set of exemplar project briefs, as well as the academic placement agreements which are shared between the College, the student and the Placement Provider. The team also met programme staff, the placement coordinator, placement providers and students who had been on placement.

2.133 The review team considered that the agreement between the student, College and placement provider established an effective basis for the operation of the placement and the process for sign-off was confirmed by the placement providers and the placement coordinator for the College. The team heard from students that they felt well supported by the College while on placement and that the placement experience was challenging but also very rewarding. The placement providers met by the team were very positive in their views regarding the process of developing the individual projects and of the quality of the students and their input to the specific placement projects.

2.134 On the basis of the placement documentation and the underpinning support processes, as well as the positive reports of experiences from both the students and the placement providers, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.135 The College does not deliver research degrees, and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.136 In reaching its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.137 All Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all Expectations. The review team identifies two areas of good practice in Expectations B3 and B4; one recommendation in Expectation B3 and two affirmations in Expectations B1 and B6.

2.138 The College has an extensive list of visiting speakers who bring external expertise to the programmes and facilitate the exchange of ideas and maintenance of programme currency. Some of these speakers are programme alumni who are now working as practitioners. Students and staff confirmed the significant perceived benefit of widening the scope of the programmes through such a wide range of expertise. The extensive involvement of visiting UK and international experts who enhance student learning opportunities is recognised by the review team as good practice.

2.139 The College's pedagogical approach is focused on the whole person and place-based learning, which is supported by the use of indoor and outdoor spaces and working together as a community. Students are supported, both in their studies and on a pastoral basis by academic staff and a recent alumnus acting as Postgraduate Teaching Support Volunteer. Students value the extent and quality of the support they receive, the structure of the teaching and the community ethos which allows them formal and extensive informal opportunities for discussion with staff. Combined with the Postgraduate Teaching Support Volunteer role, the review team considers as good practice the community ethos which provides a highly effective network of informal support structures that enhances students' academic, personal and professional potential.

2.140 The College has in place a number of mechanisms for supporting the development of teaching practice by the staff. These include the TLRG and a CPD scheme with associated funding for each member of staff to enable them to engage with external activities. Staff development is further supported through engagement with the University and encouragement to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice. A peer-to-peer review scheme is in place for every academic staff member, with the aim of identifying development and training needs and sharing good practice. Peer-to-peer observations operate within individual programmes and, given the small numbers of staff, this results in pairs of staff repeatedly observing each other over a number of years. This narrow approach was also noted by students. The review team therefore recommends that the College should extend the peer observation process across and between all programmes to facilitate the sharing of good practice.

2.141 Responsibility for the design and development of programmes rests with the College. Suggestions for new programmes, or revisions to programmes, are received from staff, alumni, external examiners and external practitioners. The College discusses these proposals then seeks advice from the University and reports the proposed programme to the Joint Board of Studies. Documentation to meet University requirements is then developed for submission to the University validation process. The University Academic Board holds ultimate responsibility for the design and development, annual review and academic management for programmes leading to University awards. While this process is operationally effective, the College has identified the need to produce a definitive handbook for the design and development of programmes. The review team therefore affirms the steps taken to produce a definitive handbook for the design and development of programmes.

2.142 Assessments are designed and set by College academic staff to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Assessment for each module is articulated in the relevant programme handbooks. Each module is assessed through subject-specific coursework, and due to the nature of the subject module assessment is often negotiated with students, ensuring the intended learning outcomes can be met. Students have expressed difficulty in relating learning outcomes and assessment criteria and the College has recognised the need for more clarity in the information provided to students regarding assessment criteria and grade descriptors. A new marking rubric is being trialled which contains more explicit assessment criteria and complete grade descriptors. The review team notes this and affirms the action being taken to formalise the link between assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes to enable students to fully understand the academic requirements of their programme.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College makes information for applicants available through the College website, social media, videos, open days and other routes. The web-based information includes summary details of programmes, fees, programme handbooks and the Admissions Policy. Students who have been accepted onto a programme are given access to the VLE prior to starting to enable them to make contact with each other and to view the programme documentation.

3.2 Handbooks are based on the University's templates and are the responsibility of the Faculty and Postgraduate Quality Coordinator, though the University approves each handbook prior to publication. Handbooks are available both electronically on the VLE and in hard copy and are made available to the students prior to arrival. The VLE also carries updated material regarding College-level activities and programme schedules. The College has recently established an improved process for version control, which is in the process of being adopted.

3.3 External examiners are also provided with all programme documentation and are given access to the VLE, as well as the newly developed Quality Store. This is an online document repository which is being constructed to contain all the quality assurance documentation and programme details.

3.4 Information regarding award achievement and the associated transcripts are issued by the University.

3.5 The details regarding information provision set out in the self-evaluation document and in the online resources would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.6 The review team studied the information provided by the College through the various media channels, including the website; the VLE; social media sites; Quality Store; the Teaching and Assessment and Programme Handbooks; and programme specifications. The team also met students and academic and support staff to discuss the provision of information.

3.7 The team was able to confirm that the College website provides a wealth of information for prospective students including details of the programmes available, application information and the associated fees, open day programmes, as well as specific information for international students. The website also carries information for current students including versions of the various handbooks, details of the teaching staff and external specialist teachers used for guest lectures. Students confirmed that the information available on the website was useful and they particularly welcomed the additional opportunity to talk to the course leaders prior to application. The students observed that the additional requirements of community life were proving more demanding than they had expected based on the information prior to arrival.

3.8 The College publishes three main handbooks: the Student College and University Handbook provides guidance regarding the College itself and its ethos, an overview of the programmes and approaches to study as well as information about the facilities, opportunities for student engagement and guidance on complaints procedures and careers support. The programme handbooks comprise the Programme Quality Handbook and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook for each programme, which provide details of the programme structure and specific approaches to teaching and assessment. The review team considered these were generally comprehensive, though there was relatively little detail regarding assessment procedures and marking criteria.

3.9 The review team was informed that there are different levels of responsibility for signing off information: module leaders are responsible for communication of programme material on the VLE and the Programme Coordinator is responsible for all specific programme-related material. The Postgraduate Quality Coordinator is responsible for the accuracy of admissions information and international student visa requirements. The Head of Communications has responsibility for signing off information across all media and directly line manages the Marketing and Communications Coordinator responsible for all social media postings. The review team was also informed that the College recognises the need to have a more robust system in place for public information. The College is reviewing this in line with work on the new student contract; a clearer Admissions Policy and plans to restructure the website; with the objective of strengthening communications sign-off procedures and both internal and external communications.

3.10 The team was also informed that the College is developing a system of version control procedures. A document control template was introduced in academic year 2015-16 for all new policies and progress is being made to add the template to the front of each definitive module record, prior to upload on the Quality Store, in order to improve management of changes made. Review of the documentation on the Quality Store showed that the process was being operated for new policies.

3.11 Based on the review of documentation and the web-based materials, as well as the feedback provided by the students regarding their experiences, the review team considered that the information provided was fit for purpose, accessible and adequate to support students in their decision making. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.12 In determining its judgement on the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.13 The review team considers that the Expectation in this area is met and that the risk to student learning opportunities is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice in this area.

3.14 The College produces information through a range of mechanisms which is fit for purpose, accessible and supports students in their decision making. Information on the College website is comprehensive and students found this information useful. The VLE contains all relevant handbooks, information on College activities and programme schedules. This is updated regularly by staff and used by students to support their learning. Students who have been accepted onto a programme are given access to the VLE prior to starting to enable them to make contact with each other and to view the programme documentation.

3.15 There are different levels of responsibility for signing off information ranging from module leaders who are responsible for programme material to the Head of Communications who has responsibility for signing off information across all media. The Quality Store is an online document repository that will contain all the quality assurance documentation once this is fully developed. Staff, students and external examiners have access to this. The College has recently established a process for version control and work has begun on a new student contract, and a new Admissions Policy.

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

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

- 4.1 The College does not have a documented Enhancement Policy, although a quality team was established in 2014 to underpin a systematic approach to quality assurance and enhancement.
- 4.2 The Academic Partnership Agreement between the College and University commits the two parties to work together to enhance and maintain the quality assurance and enhancement of the programmes offered.
- 4.3 The University is responsible for periodic reviews to verify that the College's quality assurance systems are appropriate for the assurance and enhancement of the standards of programmes and to advise the College on their development. This responsibility is discharged through a Joint Board of Studies.
- 4.4 At a strategic level the enhancement of learning and teaching is at the core of the College Interim Strategy. The Teaching, Learning and Research Strategy describe the College's philosophical and pedagogical approach and processes for continual enhancement.
- 4.5 The College manages enhancement within, and across, postgraduate programmes through the PPG. Enhancement matters are contained in individual programme action plans which are discussed and agreed through biannual Programme Committees and the annual Joint Board of Studies.
- 4.6 The College asserts that the ultimate indicators of the effectiveness in assuring and enhancing the teaching and learning for students are progress on the College and programme action plans, retention rates, and proportion of students graduating with distinction and merit.
- 4.7 A section in the Teaching Learning and Assessment Handbooks provides information to students of the ways in which the College seeks to enhance their experience.
- 4.8 Students are engaged in the enhancement process through their feedback and membership of formal and informal committees, which discuss enhancement to teaching and learning.
- 4.9 External examiners are encouraged to feed into enhancement and innovation of programmes and potentially wider College practice.
- 4.10 Recruitment, selection and admissions have been the focus of a number of strategic and deliberate improvements and enhancements over the past three years.
- 4.11 The formal and informal procedures in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

- 4.12 The review team examined all the evidence provided and at meetings invited staff and students to discuss and highlight examples of enhancement.
- 4.13 The enhancement process is effective due to the College building a creative community through 'living and learning' and students confirmed the community activities also enhanced their learning experience.
- 4.14 The Head of College identifies enhancement themes on the basis of action plans and feedback from participants. Areas for enhancement are chosen by reviewing conclusions on innovation and good practice shared by periodic programme reviews; points noted by external examiners; points highlighted through peer-to-peer reviews or identified through the Teaching, Learning and Research Group.
- 4.15 The College seeks to enhance the teaching and learning process through transformational learning to support the student experience. Students are encouraged to take the lead in investigating specific issues affecting the student learning experience. In addition, enhancement is achieved through work-based learning, live projects, short placements and guest lectures.
- 4.16 Students praise the ethos of continual improvement, in particular through the dedication and work of the Postgraduate Quality Coordinator and the Postgraduate Programme Administrator. Module feedback is used effectively to enhance the student experience. For example, the sequence of module delivery was changed in response to discussion with students on feedback and students were invited to the TLRG to engage directly with programme teams to discuss and reflect on pedagogical approaches.
- 4.17 An alumnus is appointed as a Postgraduate Teaching Support Volunteer to undertake tasks specifically orientated toward enhancement of the student experience. On two of the programmes the College also uses alumni as volunteer learning assistants which the students found to be valuable.
- 4.18 The University Faculty Partnership Manager reports that the College continues to 'provide a transformative learning experience. Its teaching provisions are appropriate and its student learning environment offers a particularly high standard of education and personal growth for all of its students'.
- 4.19 Annual action plans for each programme identify areas to enhance the student experience, for example the development of a research module to help students to deepen their academic enquiry.
- 4.20 The development and approval by the University of a research node at the College, together with the developments of MRes and PhD programmes, is expected to further enhance the ethos of teaching and learning within the College.
- 4.21 The College is also developing a Worldwide Network to enable alumni, subject experts and current students to communicate and learn from each other.
- 4.22 Although there is no dedicated College Enhancement Strategy, the review team was satisfied that a number of enhancements were identified in the written evidence and these were clarified and supported during discussion with staff and students. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.23 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice.

4.24 Although there is no formalised strategy or policy for enhancement published by the College, there is evidence of an integrated, systematic approach to enhancement. The enhancement of learning and teaching is at the core of the College Interim Strategy and the enhancement process is effective due to the College building a creative community through 'living and learning' which students confirm enhances their learning experience.

4.25 The College manages enhancement within postgraduate programmes through the PPG. Annual action plans for each programme identify areas for enhancement and the Head of College identifies enhancement themes on the basis of action plans and feedback.

4.26 Students are engaged in the enhancement process through their feedback and membership of formal and informal committees and they praise the ethos of continual improvement within the College. External examiners are encouraged to feed into enhancement and innovation of programmes and potentially wider College practice.

4.27 Evidence of a strong commitment to continuous improvement can be seen in the development and approval by the University of a research node at the College; the development of the Worldwide Network; the appointment of dedicated postgraduate staff and volunteer alumni; and improvements to recruitment, selection and admissions processes.

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

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 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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