Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Spurgeon's College

June 2016

Contents

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 Spurgeon's College. The review took place from 28 to 30 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Terence Clifford-Amos
- Ms Sarah Macdonald
- Ms Isabel Beynon (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

In reviewing Spurgeon's College, the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The themes for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability, and Digital Literacy,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Spurgeon's College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Spurgeon's College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree awarding bodies **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 Spurgeon's College:

- The extensive range of external expertise used by the College to assure academic standards and enhance student learning opportunities (A3.4 and Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Spurgeon's College.

By June 2017:

- ensure that the institution-wide annual monitoring process resolves and records all actions within an appropriate timeframe (Expectation B8)
- make provision for the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of annual monitoring across the institution (Expectation B8).

Theme: Student Employability

Spurgeon's College is a specialist College offering vocational academic and research degrees and, as such, is focused on delivering courses which meet specific employment routes. Students are welcomed from a range of different backgrounds and share a range of experiences which enhance the undergraduate and postgraduate communities. The annual employment success of the College is high although it recognises that employability is always an area for increased enhancement. There is a high proportion of Ministers in Training (MiT) who are mature students, having followed earlier careers and often have well-developed work skills. Whether for future employment or otherwise, employability and transferable skills are now a required consideration in the approval process of all unit descriptors approved by the University of Manchester. Students develop skills for employment which include, for example, communication (written and oral), leadership, working in groups, and other advantageous cultural benefits.

The College places great emphasis on placement churches and supervisors so as to ensure that an all-round experience of ministry is obtained. In their placement, Ministers in Training are practitioners developing their skills and knowledge in accordance with the Baptist Union guidelines. A range of careers are available to graduates including an academic life, a career in a church via the Baptist Union settlement process, other church appointments and appointments in the secular world. The College recognises that more formal career advice will need to be available for future non-vocational students, especially if there is growth in

this recruitment pathway. Vacancies which come to the attention of the College are passed on to students.

Employers with whom the review team met were unanimous in their view that the College prepares students well for ministry offering a good balance of academic and vocational study. Employers believed they worked positively with the College towards preparing students and graduates in character formation, maturity of faith, skills development, inter-personal relationships, theological reflection, cultural diversity and adaptability. Advice on employability for students who hold a degree in Religious Studies or Theology is also provided by the Higher Education Academy and by Precision Consultancy.

College priorities are to sustain good practices towards long-term ministry and employment which includes time management and develop a healthy work/life balance. Students are encouraged towards the development of life-long accountability. Ministerial students are particularly encouraged to work in partnership with other local Baptist churches and to network with other church denominations as one means of militating against leading a solitary way of life in the ministry. Students are very positive that pastoral groups are helpful in preparing them for future employment. Students recognise the ways employability is embedded into their programmes, mainly through placements. Employers invited to contribute to the delivery of course materials are said by students to offer a variable degree of useful information and are generally helpful and positive. Though involved with the work of the College variously, employers expressed an interest in being more active as partners in process. Employability is a significant aspect of the College's provision, in which strong vocational development is multifaceted.

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

About Spurgeon's College

Spurgeon's College was founded in 1856 and is one of the six providers with the core aim of training ministers for service in the Baptist Union of Great Britain. It is a higher education College that exists to provide Christ-centred training in discipleship for the practice of mission and ministry. It does this primarily through offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study. As a confessional college, Spurgeon's College is committed to studying and understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ as witnessed to by the Scriptures and the challenges of the world in which this gospel is to be proclaimed. Spurgeon's College is in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB), the Evangelical Alliance and the Micah Network.

The College's aims are:

- to form women and men in discipleship for the Christian life and to serve effectively in local ministry as pastors, teachers, pioneers and evangelists;
- to provide opportunities for the in-service training of Christian leaders, enabling them to reflect theologically on their ministry and develop further skills
- to provide training and resources for a wide-range of ordained and lay Christian ministries
- to foster and advance research in areas of academic and professional study relevant to the needs of the Christian Church; and
- to provide excellent and continually improving levels of formation, education and learning resources for all students.

The College is located on a single campus in Croydon, south London, with some residential accommodation for both students and staff. There is a long history of delivering higher education, initially in conjunction with the University of London and, from 1974 until its demise in 1992, with Council for National Academic Awards.

Currently, the College is a Collaborative Partner of the University of Manchester, a Partner of the University of Chester and a Collaborative Centre of the University of Wales.

The University of Wales validated all of the College's degree programmes (undergraduate, master's and research) from 1992 to 2012, when it ceased to take new registrations from collaborative centres. There are still some part-time students at the College registered on University of Wales programmes. When all these students have completed their programme, the relationship between the College and the University of Wales will cease.

Since 2012, the College's undergraduate and master's degree programmes have been validated by the University of Manchester.

Since 2010, the College's research degree programmes (MPhil, PhD, DMin) have been validated by the University of Chester as an approved partner. All new registrations for the DMin, and since 2013 most new registrations for the MPhil and PhD have been with the University of Chester. Since 2014, the College has also had a split-site arrangement for PhD students with the University of Manchester, whereby a student may have a first supervisor at Manchester and a second supervisor at the College.

At the time of the review the College had 936 students registered. The College has seven, soon to be eight, full-time and three part-time members of teaching staff.

The College appointed a new principal in 2013 following the retirement of the previous Principal. At the time of the review, the Principal was indisposed and the Acting Principal was present. The College subsequently underwent a restructuring exercise in 2015-16 of its academic and administrative staff and which created a second Vice-Principal, to which the post holder will arrive in July 2016. The Senior Management Team has been reconstituted as the College Leadership Team and the role redefined. In March 2016, the College retained its Home Office Tier 4 Sponsor status. Within its history of discipleship, the College has been a pioneer in widening participation

The College was subject to a QAA Review for Education Oversight in June 2012 which identified four areas of good practice, two advisable recommendations and six desirable recommendations. In June 2013, the QAA annual monitoring report recorded that the College had made acceptable progress against its action plan and, in June 2014, the annual monitoring report recorded that the College had made commendable progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the previous monitoring visit. The review team considered the progress made by the College in developing the good practice and implementing the recommendations and concludes that they have all been satisfactorily addressed.

Explanation of the findings about Spurgeon's College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies

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

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* 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   Spurgeon's College is not an awarding body and offers programmes validated by three awarding bodies: the University of Chester, the University of Manchester and the University of Wales. The University of Wales partnership ended in October 2012 for new admissions.

1.2   The Academic Board is responsible to the College Governors for all planning, development, operation and monitoring of the academic work in accordance with partner agreements established by the College's awarding bodies. Draft terms of reference for reconstituting the Academic Board as an Academic Advisory Group have been drawn up, but the Governors have agreed to put these on hold for the present.

1.3   The College offers certificates and diplomas of higher education, bachelor and master's degrees, post-graduate diplomas and doctoral programmes. Currently, six programmes are available online. The titles of the awards conform to both the norms of the awarding bodies and the titling conventions illustrated in the FHEQ. The College's programmes are clearly articulated in programme specifications which define the thresholds for the awards offered.

1.4   The College works closely with each of its awarding bodies and demonstrates equivalence in quality, standard and content in maintaining programme specifications that conform to their requirements and to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) descriptors at each level of the relevant programme and also to the Subject Benchmark Statements for Theology and Religious Studies. Awarding bodies are responsible for checking whether the programme learning outcomes are aligned with the qualification descriptors set out in the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.5   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A1 to be met.

1.6   The review team considered partnership agreements, awarding body regulations, FHEQ alignments, Subject Benchmark Statements, validation arrangements and programme specifications. The review team explored the application of these authorities and processes with senior managers and, where appropriate, with teaching and support staff.

1.7   The programme approval process, annual monitoring processes, programme amendment, external examiner processes and other vocational and professional external reference points and influences all attest to how programmes meet threshold academic standards and the expectations embedded in the FHEQ.

1.8   The Academic Board is responsible for monitoring all that pertains to learning, teaching, their delivery, quality assurance and management and ensures that both compliance and the particular enterprises and academic interests of the College are fully met. Within the regulations of the awarding bodies and the permitted College scope for programme development, the Academic Board acts as an initial and ultimate internal body for any new programme proposals, new programmes themselves and their constituent units, or for the modification or revision of existing ones. The updated terms of reference for the current Academic Board encompass the entire academic endeavour of the College, including extended activities, for example in keeping abreast of national standards and staff training. Monitoring is conducted through the work of the Academic Board, which contains external representatives from the higher education sector, staff and students. The College regards it prudent for future practice that individual tutors regularly re-visit the FHEQ and the awarding bodies' own guidance and procedures.

1.9   In devising and modifying programmes, the College collaborates closely with its relevant awarding body to ensure that its programme specifications conform to the Characteristics Statements for each degree level. The awarding bodies ensure that national standards are met though mapping against national frameworks and the College organises its programmes in ways which meet or exceed awarding body expectations. Programme approval and validation processes, under the governance of each awarding body, are clear in their requirements as to how the College should secure threshold academic standards.

1.10   The senior leadership team is responsible for implementing awarding body regulations. Some individual awarding body expertise has been developed within the team, though ultimate oversight resides with the Registry who receive regular updates from all three awarding bodies.

1.11   The review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met. The associated risk is low because the College meets the requirements of its awarding bodies in all aspects of regulations and procedures and has the facility and senior expertise to execute and meet these tasks and obligations.

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

1.11   The awarding bodies are responsible for the overall setting and maintenance of academic standards. The College has three collaborative partnership agreements with awarding bodies, which are all documented in written agreements. Each awarding body has a set of robust policies, protocols and arrangements governing students pursuing academic programmes at the College. The College meets these standards through its own internal regulations, committees, policies, procedures and operating structures in alignment with its awarding bodies.

1.12   The leadership team is responsible for all day-to-day College matters and for the Strategic Plan 2014 -2019. The vision of the College dictates the entire whole of College strategy.

1.13   The College has developed its own internal governance system comprising ten operating units, which in reporting and accountability, are ultimately responsible to the College Council and the Governors. Internal approval bodies comprise the Governing Body, Governance Group, the Leadership Team, Academic Board and Teaching Staff Meetings.

1.14   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.15   The review team read collaborative partnership agreements, regulations, examined the work of the internal governance groups, Academic Board and the Leadership Team, read examples of programme specifications, course descriptors and met senior College staff and teaching staff.

1.16   The College liaises closely with the appropriate awarding body to ensure that practices conform with awarding body regulations and expectations. Currently, some part-time students at the College are registered for a University of Wales award and therefore subject to its regulations. Following completion of these programmes, when all these students have completed their studies, the relationship between the College and the University of Wales will be discontinued.

1.17   The Academic Board is the ultimate authority on academic matters and provides guidance on assessment, relationships with external bodies, the student body, staff development, research and resources. The Academic Board is scheduled to meet not less than twice each year. In their work with awarding bodies, the Director of Studies (and, previously, the Academic Dean) and Registry staff are in regular contact with University of Wales Registry staff and also the University of Manchester's Collaborative Academic Adviser and Collaborative Partnership Administrative Officer. Similarly, the College Director of Postgraduate Research and the Research Administrator maintain frequent contact with the University of Wales Head of Research, Enterprise and Innovation, also with other University of Wales Registry staff, and with the University of Chester Partnerships Administrator, Link Tutor and the students' Directors of Studies. The regulations of the awarding bodies provide the external regulatory framework which guide the fundamental academic work of the College.

1.18   Since 2012, continuation of all the College's undergraduate and master's degree programmes has been through validation with the University of Manchester and students are subject to their regulations. Since 2014, there has been a split-site configuration with the University of Manchester, facilitating a PhD candidate's first supervisor at Manchester and a second at the College. This arrangement is overseen directly by the University of Manchester, though the College has some responsibilities within this arrangement. The College has other research degree programmes (MPhil, PhD, DMin) currently validated by the University of Chester. Research students on these programmes are subject to its regulations.

1.19   From late 2014 to the present, the College has been restructuring towards more closely matching roles and responsibilities within the increased demands of academic regulation and also the added complexity of working with different awarding bodies. A new Senior Registrar with experience in awarding body administration has been appointed as well as a second Vice Principal in the role of Director of Studies who will commence his duties in July 2016 to ensure the rigorous implementation of awarding body regulations in the day-to-day academic life of the College. The College acknowledges that operating different regulatory frameworks simultaneously has been challenging.

1.20   The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College scrupulously follows the regulations and guidance provided by its awarding bodies, has increased its senior administrative capacity and strengthened its internal governance groups and systems.

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

1.21   The responsibility for maintaining the definitive records of the programmes and qualifications rests with the College's awarding bodies. The approved Programme Specifications and all current unit descriptors are available on the College's website. A new virtual learning environment (VLE) is being developed and will make student and staff access to programme specifications and unit descriptors more accessible and straightforward and which will allow relevant material related to the student's University registration or staff role to be automatically directed to their profile.

1.22   The College's policies and procedures would allow Expectation A2.2 to be met.

1.23   The review team considered the range of material available to prospective and current students and staff through the website, taking note of the Programme Specifications and unit descriptors. The review team met current students and senior staff, and attended a demonstration of the new VLE.

1.24   Students with whom the review team met are happy with the availability of the information relating to the Programme Specification and unit descriptors. The information is easy to locate prior to applying through the website and that staff are willing to talk through the specifications at open days and other pre-application visits to ensure that students choose the most relevant course. The information on assessments in the handbooks contain clear information, including learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit. Teaching staff adhere to these and explain how lectures and other learning opportunities relate to the learning outcomes either at the start of the unit or at each individual lecture. Assessment and feedback is in line with the assessment criteria provided.

1.25   The review team concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has in place procedures to ensure definitive records of each programme and unit descriptors are accurate and available to prospective and current students.

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

1.26   The awarding bodies retain responsibility for the approval of new programmes and units. Modifications cannot be made to programmes without the relevant awarding bodies' approval.

1.27   The College works within the awarding bodies processes for approval and they have responsibility for the academic standards of the awards. The awarding bodies' processes require programmes to meet UK threshold standards and, in particular, the standards specified in the FHEQ as well as University framework requirements.

1.28   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.29   The review team read documentation provided by the College, including the awarding bodies' regulations, the agreements between the College and the awarding bodies, reports on approval of College programmes, and minutes of committee meetings and held meetings with senior and teaching staff of the College.

1.30   The University of Chester approved the DMin and MPhil/PhD programmes in 2010 and 2013 respectively and these were subject to a successful periodic review in January 2016. The University of Manchester approved the BA (Hons) Theology, MA and MTh programmes in 2012 and the split-site PhD programme in 2014. The University of Wales programmes were approved in 2000 and were subject to a successful review in 2011.

1.31   The College has policies and procedures for proposing new or revised units which are intimately approved by the awarding bodies. A recent example is a number of revisions made to the BA in Theology units. These are considered by an academic panel of the awarding body which includes a representative from the College. For the Theology units, the panel requested a number of amendments which the College made and, following these amendments, the revisions were approved.

1.32   The review team concludes that Expectation 3.1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College's policies and procedure work within the clearly defined processes of the awarding bodies.

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

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

Findings

1.33   The College's awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that credit and qualifications are awarded only on the basis of the achievement of relevant learning outcomes and that both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.

1.34   The University of Chester provides detailed guidance on writing unit descriptors which requires the unit learning outcomes to be aligned with the FHEQ and gives advice on how to ensure this. The guidance also requires the College to identify which learning outcomes each component of assessment is to address. The University of Manchester's programme specification template requires the College to map the learning outcomes for the level to the learning outcomes for the core unit for that level. The University of Manchester regulations explicitly require each course unit to have an assessment strategy which is clearly aligned with the unit's intended learning outcomes and also stipulate that assessment design should be taken into account when the learning outcomes for a course unit are conceived or revised. The regulations make it clear that the stated learning outcomes for a unit should be summatively assessed. The University of Wales' regulatory system requires that programme structures accord with the requirements of the Credit and Qualifications Frameworks for Wales and that all awards conform to the approved structure.

1.35   Summative assessment tasks are drafted by the College's tutors and are then sent to the relevant external examiner (appointed by the awarding bodies) for approval before being released to students. External examiners are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the learning outcomes of the relevant units are met through the set assessment tasks and are set at the appropriate level. This is set out in more detail in section B7.

1.36   The College develops its own marking criteria for the University of Manchester and University of Wales courses and this is then approved by the awarding body before use. In the case of the University of Chester's DMin programme, the College uses the awarding body's criteria.

1.37   The College ensures that the volume of learning is appropriate to the credit awarded by requiring staff to consider the number of notional learning hours which a student will need to spend on a unit as part of the design process. The College works within the requirements of the relevant awarding body regarding the magnitude of assessment expected for units depending on their level and credit value.

1.38   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A3.2 to be met.

1.39   The review team read documentation provided by the College, including the awarding bodies' regulations, the agreements between the College and the awarding bodies,

reports on approval of College programmes and external examiners reports. The review team also met students, senior and teaching staff of the College.

1.40   The College has a Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy which stipulates that assessment tasks must be aligned with programme and modular learning outcomes. Learning outcomes for units must be set at the appropriate level (see sections A3.1 and B1) and the College requires staff to reflect on whether the learning outcomes for a unit have been met in the unit evaluations which they complete at the end of each semester. Tutors must consult the intended learning outcomes for a unit when drafting the assessment tasks for that units and staff training is provided on this, including training on mapping assessment questions and marking criteria to the intended learning outcomes.

1.41   Academic staff have a clear understanding of the College's second marking and moderation policy which includes in its principles that one of the aims of second marking and moderation is to provide a check that assessments have been marked in line with the expressed aims and learning outcomes of the unit. Students report that assessments are appropriate to the level of the unit, that they become more challenging as they progress through their course and that feedback on assessments directly references the learning outcomes for the unit.

1.42   The College provides clear and detailed guidance for unit designers which includes guidelines on the expectations regarding notional learning hours, on how to estimate this and on how notional learning hours relate to the volume of credit. Unit instructions for students communicate clearly the amount of time they will be expected to spend on different aspects of the unit including on assessment tasks.

1.43   External examiners reports express satisfaction with the standards of the awards, the standards achieved by students and the comparability of standards with other UK higher education institutions.

1.44   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has developed its own effective procedures for the assessment of students while working within the clearly defined responsibilities of the awarding bodies.

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

1.45   Responsibility for annual monitoring and periodic review is shared between the College and its respective awarding bodies.

1.46   The University of Chester sets out a clear process for monitoring and review in its Quality and Standards Manual which the College must follow. The College is required to complete an annual monitoring report using the awarding body's template and the scrutiny, review and approval processes for these reports by the awarding body is the same as for their own programmes. In addition, the awarding body scrutinises key data sets from the College on an annual basis. The University of Chester undertakes a periodic review of the College every three years, one of the purposes of which is explicitly to confirm that the College continues to meet the University of Chester's requirements and expectations of quality and academic standards.

1.47   For the University of Manchester, the College's programmes are included in annual report considered by the University's Quality Committee for the School of Arts, Languages and Culture's to the Panel for Theology and Religious Studies. This panel includes a representative from the College. An academic adviser is appointed by the University and visits the College twice a year, then produces a report which is considered by the Panel for Theology and Religious Studies. The University of Manchester also undertakes a periodic review of the College's programmes every five years, the first of these being due in 2017.

1.48   For the University of Wales, the Joint Board of Studies (JBOS) is a key part of the annual monitoring process. It comprises senior academic staff from both the University of Wales and the College, and also students and reports to the University's Academic Board. Its terms of reference include receiving and considering the annual monitoring report and receiving and considering external examiner reports. The University of Wales conducts quinquennial reviews of its validated programmes. The last of these was in 2011, but as no new students are being enrolled on these programmes a further review has not taken place.

1.49   The reports of the College's external examiners, who are appointed by the awarding bodies, also contribute to the monitoring of the College's programmes and require the external examiner to report on the academic standards of the programmes within their remit (see section B7).

1.50   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A3.3 to be met.

1.51   The review team read documentation provided by the College, including the awarding bodies' regulations, the agreements between the College and the awarding bodies, reports on review of the College programmes, minutes of committee and panel meetings and through meetings with senior and teaching staff of the College.

1.52   The College complies with the awarding bodies' policies and procedures for monitoring and review. The University of Chester periodically reviews the College's partnership. The partnership was successfully reviewed in 2013 which included the review

and revalidation of the DMin and had a successful review in 2016 which included a review and revalidation of the DMin. The awarding body concluded that there was clear alignment with the FHEQ and that the programme is clearly informed by the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The awarding body is also satisfied that the programme complies with the awarding body's Principles and Regulations and the Framework for Doctoral Programmes.

1.53   The University of Manchester Academic Adviser's Collaborative Report 2013-14 noted that a number minor issues had arisen as the College implemented the University of Manchester's regulations, ways of working and expectations. These have now been addressed. The University of Wales programmes were subject to a successful periodic review in 2011

1.54   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College works within the frameworks of the awarding bodies.

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

1.55   The College's awarding bodies are responsible for the standards of awards and offer external inputs in both formal and informal ways. Formal inputs and advice are vitally linked to the developmental phases of programme design, programme awards and programme review. Awarding bodies also provide a range of important internal key contacts. Awarding body advisers, when they visit College, take the opportunity meet with staff to discuss and resolve any issues or help with developments. External examiners and a range of other external and professional inputs, including networks of church advisers, publishers, the Ministry Council of the Church of England and critical friends also inform academic and non-academic processes. The College is a member of the Baptist Colleges' Partnership, comprising six institutions, committed to cooperation. During 2016-17, the College will take part in a peer-review exercise conducted with the other Baptist Colleges in the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The College has responded positively to the operational recommendations made in the University of Manchester's collaborative report for 2013-14.

1.56   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.57   The review team considered a range of academic external inputs, external examiner reports and their commentaries on good practice, programme approval documentation, awarding body advice, a range of external and professional inputs which inform academic, vocational and professional processes and also met senior managers and teaching staff.

1.58   External representation is made on key decision making and advisory bodies including the Academic Board the Board of Governors, the College Council and the Quality Assurance Committee. External independent advice is often sought for programme design, the conferment of programme awards and programme reviews. Awarding bodies provide the College with a list of key contacts. The minutes of the Academic Board, Quality Assurance Committee and Research Degrees Committee record the regular presence of external members whose membership provides a vital role, not least in the perspective they provide on the quality of the College's provision. The College is a confessional college which adheres to the nationally-identified competencies for ministry, of which there are thirteen identified by the Baptist Union of Great Britain. These form an essential part of student development during their ministry formation.

1.59   The chairs of the Board of Governors, the College Council and the Quality Assurance Committee are external colleagues engaged in order to promote transparency and openness. As the Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Board are responsible for Academic Standards, external representation is particularly valuable to the work these bodies undertake. The College also engages in external staff training with experts.

1.60   Within their examining roles, external examiners appointed by awarding bodies are required to submit regular reports on the College's implementation of academic standards,

student achievement and the ways in which assessment and examination boards are conducted. The awarding bodies pass on these reports to the College for its responses to any recommendations. External examiner feedback, which evaluates the College's academic standards against the national framework in terms of programme content, assessment and teaching methodology and the evaluations and advice they bring, are important sources of externality.

1.61   In 2011, the College participated in an external review organised by Quality in Formation, purposed to assess the fitness for purpose of the training institution for preparing candidates for ordained and licensed ministry. None of the recommendations made in the review questioned the generally high standards found in the inspection.

1.62   Staff serve on the boards of religious publishers which, as a process can inform their own teaching, research and practice. Tutorial staff serve on the Baptist Union of Great Britain Council and its relevant committees and are directly involved in standards in theological education. Staff training opportunities engage external input, and staff seek particular advice from other higher education institutions on the design of units. There has been training from dyslexia specialists and from a member of the panel involved in the agreement of the Theology and Religious Studies Subject Benchmark Standards. Higher Education Academy training events, participating in massive open online courses (MOOCs), and attending subject specialist lectures, conferences and study groups, the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians, the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical and Theological Research, the British New Testament Conference, the Society for the Study of Theology, the Ecclesiastical History Society, and the Baptist Historical Society all provide excellent means of importing external influences to the College.

1.63   External Christian members can participate in placement support groups. External speakers are also invited to undergraduate and postgraduate seminars General academic advice is sought from other institutions of higher education and from the other Baptist Colleges.

1.64   A range of other external speakers also afford new directions and challenging ideas. Recently, there have been visitors from theological Colleges in Australia, America, Finland, Latvia and the Ukraine. The College's external influences are energetic and eclectic. The extensive inclusion of external expertise used by the College to assure academic standards and enhance student learning opportunities is **good practice**.

1.65   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the range of external inputs, consultation and evaluation is extensive, strong and vibrant.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.67   All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and the level of risk is judged to be low. There is one area of good practice relating to the College's extensive range of external expertise used by the College to assure academic standards and enhance student learning opportunities.

1.68   The review team concludes that the maintenance of academic standards **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   Programme approval is the responsibility of the awarding bodies. The College is responsible for proposing new programmes and units and for proposing modifications to programmes or units, but the process for approval and criteria by which these proposals are finally evaluated is set by the awarding bodies.

2.2   Proposals for unit design are initiated by the College's teaching staff and may be discussed with their peers in other Colleges in the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The views of students on new proposals are sometimes canvassed at this stage by means of informal conversations and hitherto there has not been a formal process for this. The inclusion of students on the Quality Assurance Committee will resolve this in the future.

2.3   The documentation is prepared according to the clear templates provided by the awarding body and the proposal is scrutinised at the College's monthly teaching staff meeting which includes not only all teaching staff but also the Senior Registrar, Director of Operations, Director of Practical Training and the Librarian. This allows not only academic discussion of the unit but also consideration of resource implications and in particular the library resources needed to support the unit. Following this, amendments may be made before the proposal is considered by Quality Assurance Committee before consideration by the Academic Board who may approve or may require amendments at which point the process would start the cycle again. Once this internal process is complete the proposal is submitted to the awarding body for approval. The College process may include consultation with, and analysis by, a critical friend and this has contributed to the feature of good practice identified in section A3.4.

2.4   The College's policies and procedures would allow Expectation B1 to be met.

2.5   The review team read documentation provided by the College, including the awarding bodies' procedures, the terms of reference of the College's committees and minutes of committee meetings and staff meetings. The review team also met teaching and senior staff, and students.

2.6   The committee structure has recently been revised to include scrutiny by the Quality Assurance Committee, before the proposal is sent to Academic Board. The remit of this committee is to assess all aspects of academic quality in the College including curriculum design. Students will now be formally included in the programme approval and design process through their representation on this committee.

2.7   Robust and detailed scrutiny takes place both internally and externally although the College does not have a formal policy or document setting out the internal process or the criteria to be taken into account when evaluating programme proposals.

2.8   Many of the staff are practitioners and consider the relevance of practice in the design of units and programmes and they are aware of the emphasis placed on this in the

Subject Benchmark Statement. The employers with whom the review team met are not routinely consulted regarding new proposals or modifications to programmes or units, although they expressed their willingness to contribute to the process to ensure the currency of the vocational programmes to the environment in which graduates will be practising.

2.9   The review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College, working with its awarding bodies, operates effective processes for programme design, development and approval.

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

2.10   The Admissions Protocols for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes set out clear admissions procedures and processes. These include the challenges of recruiting students with particular religious beliefs with the principles of fair admissions (that is the requirement for level of knowledge relating to the Bible, and the five criteria for ministerial training). The responsibility for admissions differs between the awarding bodies. The College is responsible for admissions for University of Wales and University of Manchester programmes but the responsibility for admissions for University of Chester programmes is shared between the College and the awarding body.

2.11   Admissions processes at the College are overseen by the Admissions Committee which is responsible for all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes except for the MPhil/PhD which is the responsibility of the Director of Postgraduate Research. The role of the Admissions Committee is to agree and to update the Admission Protocols, to consider any non-standard applications and any appeals from applicants, to establish entry criteria for the admission of candidates on the basis of previous experience to the undergraduate and the postgraduate courses, to consider applications for entry on the basis of relevant experience and to supervise the implementation of the 'Protocol for the Matriculation of Candidates for University of Manchester Higher Degrees on the Basis of Relevant Experience'. The Committee meets three times a year to review progress in admissions, discuss any issues arising and to review current entry criteria guidelines. The meetings are minuted and copies are sent to the University of Manchester as part of its annual report.

2.12   Prospective students are encouraged to take up opportunities to meet current students and staff through open days. Information relating to programmes is available through the website and in the printed prospectus. There is a clear prior learning procedure for admission which requires the mapping of the volume of learning and learning outcomes of prior certificated learning to the unit(s) from which students/applicants may claim exemption.

2.13   The admissions process for the University of Manchester validated programmes is approved by it, as set out in the College's admissions protocols. The criteria for admission are informed by the mission of the College. It has recently joined UCAS aiding selection and admission coherence for prospective undergraduate students, and contributing to the safeguarding of undergraduate student data.

2.14   Students on the undergraduate programmes are admitted on the basis of academic qualification and interview. All undergraduate applications for full-time courses are received through UCAS with the exception of candidates for Baptist Union ministerial training. For those students applying through the Baptist Union route, there is a rigorous process of testing and interview prior to applicants attending a College interview. Accepted students are subsequently registered with UCAS by the College. Applicants for full-time programmes are interviewed by a panel and part-time students are interviewed by a member of teaching staff. Online applicants are not interviewed.

2.15   Admissions for postgraduate programmes differ between taught and research degrees. For taught programmes, the requirements for admissions are laid out in the Postgraduate Admissions protocol, while postgraduate research applicants are subject to the University of Chester Selection and Admissions Policy. The College recommends the admission based upon a judgement of specific evidence including application, CV, previous transcripts, references, interview report and confirmation that there is the required expertise and resource for the research subject. Research students are encouraged to make contact with subject relevant prospective supervisors prior to submitting application to ensure that the most appropriate supervisor and mode of study is selected.

2.16   Admissions staff have attended training by UCAS. The College provides guidance for admissions staff and a list of questions for interviewees.The College operates an appeal procedure for rejected students as set out in the Admissions Protocols which require an appeal in writing within four weeks of rejection.

2.17   The College's policies and the procedures would allow Expectation B2 to be met.

2.18   The review team considered the responsibilities of the College in partnership with its awarding bodies, the admissions protocols of the College, the Admissions Committee terms of reference, Admissions Committee minutes, and the College's Vision and Values 2015. The review team also looked at a sample open day programme, an email confirmation UCAS training, an example rejection letter and guidelines and suggested questions for interviews. The review team explored the application of these processes through meetings with senior, support and teaching staff, and confirmed them further through a meeting with students, although there was no PhD student present.

2.19   Students reported that the admission process is clearly outlined and available in the prospectus and on the website. There are three open days a year at which College staff provide a valuable source of information on suitable programmes and the application process including information on prior learning. Information is clear and helpful.

2.20   The Admissions Committee has not met over the last two years with its usual frequency, primarily due to a number of staff changes, but the intention is to meet at least three times per year. The Committee has recently recommenced its meetings and has met three times in 2016. There is another meeting planned for September 2016.

2.21   The review and monitoring of the admission protocols is the role of the Admissions Committee which is currently being revised to incorporate within its terms of reference, the provision for appeals, as well as ensuring parity between the admission processes across different awarding bodies. Some elements of the admission processes such as admission and uptake statistics are subject to an annual report which is then submitted to the Academic Board.

2.22   The College regularly reviews its admission processes and a challenge for the College is late applications despite a deadline for the receipt of applications being published on the website. Late admission has implications for timetabling and maintaining a fair admission process. The College's policy is not to disadvantage legitimate late applicants. The College has responded to the issue of late applications by establishing an additional interview day in September.

2.23   The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has clear policies and procedures for admissions and regular reviews their operation.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.24   Learning and teaching matters is the responsibility of the Academic Board. Although the College does not operate a learning and teaching forum or committee, a Learning and Teaching Framework Policy was adopted in 2012 and is now the responsibility of the Director of Studies. It offers the basis for effective learning and teaching. This Framework, however, is presented as a series of guiding precepts rather than being one of developed practicality, but essentially it informs the Staff Development Policy, the new VLE and feeds into unit descriptors. The Framework is designed to emphasise and stimulate critical thinking and develop independent thinking and learning. The College will make this Framework available to the student body through the new VLE.

2.25   There is a learning outcome-centred approach for students who are made aware of these when learning outcomes relate to units or sessions of teaching and they are encouraged to check their progress against them. For online students this is achieved by students being directed to review their learning at the end of each session.

2.26   The learning environment includes an extensive theological library of some 70,000 volumes and an annual budget of £30,000. In support of this facility, the new VLE site will be introduced for September, an initiative essentially developed by the stimulation of student feedback. Students are highly motivated by the new opportunities for learning and access to various materials that this will bring. The new VLE is an aspect of the College's vigorous approach towards upgrading its site and facilities, as indicated in its Strategic Plan for 2014-19.

2.27   The College ensures that all academic appointments at all levels are made according to the requirements of the awarding bodies and that appointees are appropriately qualified.

2.28   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B3 to be met.

2.29   The review team examined handbooks, policy documents, including the Teaching Framework Policy and Strategic Plan, listened to a presentation on the new VLE and discussed the expansive agenda for learning and teaching with a range of staff and students.

2.30   A variety of teaching styles is encouraged to suit the needs of the full range of students, which includes a high-level of interaction, a well-established and much appreciated feature of class time. Such is its value of learning and teaching that staff training has been provided to encourage more diversity in teaching, learning and assessment towards achieving greater inclusivity. Notwithstanding these innovations, the University of Manchester's Academic Panel has recently requested more varied and creative assessments. These will be implemented gradually when the new VLE is launched in September.

2.31   Students stated that there were too many options from which to choose, as their keenness motivated them to pursue them all. External speakers are appreciated by students, especially when undergraduates are invited to external speaker events with the postgraduates. The range of approaches to learning and teaching is accompanied by good quality handouts. Teaching staff are engaging and stimulating and the College Leadership Team is committed to reducing teaching hours to allow more time for the supervision of students.

2.32   The Staff Training Coordinator promotes new methods of learning and teaching through research from staff and other sources, including the Higher Education Academy (HEA). From these, teaching staff training events can then be planned.

2.33   The processes of learning and teaching include peer review which takes place annually. There is particular focus on a different area each year so that, for example, classroom approaches, the use of audio-visual technology, marking, or responding to student feedback can be explored in depth. Common themes enable the process to promote the sharing of the good practice endorsed by tutors. Guidelines and pro formas for the process are followed to maximise potential. Peer review also includes associate lecturers.

2.34   Teaching Staff meetings involve all teaching staff and some support staff and the librarian. They are scheduled to include ongoing review of processes of enabling student development, as well as specific student concerns and, when required, to look holistically at unit formation.

2.35   Teaching competence is enhanced through the gaining of high-level discipline-based qualifications, with a particular emphasis on gaining doctorates and advancing scholarship. The College actively encourages staff to be members of professional bodies in subject-specific disciplines. Funding is provided for staff to attend a minimum of one academic conference annually, and colleagues are encouraged to seek a term's study leave every four years for research and writing. All full-time teaching staff are reviewed annually by the Principal for professional development purposes. Teaching contact hours are optimal and the high-level of pastoral care is very generously afforded. The newly established Learning Support Department offers writing support, academic counselling, referral and other informal aspects of student support.

2.36   There is a range of feedback mechanisms, including student feedback towards improving the quality of teaching. MOOCs on Learning to Teach Online and University Teaching and Blended Learning have been successfully completed and are part of the College's developmental portfolio. A shared understanding of teaching and learning is in evidence and there are various support strategies for students of all abilities, including an open-door policy and shared community activities. Assessments include formative and summative procedures and staff are encouraged to design assessments to be sympathy with an inclusive approach to suit those with a range of learning styles and needs.

2.37   Staff interest and training in teaching and learning forms a discursive culture in the College. Colleagues engage in lively reflection and evaluation of professional practice, subject specific and educational scholarship. Students feel that staff are adequately trained and qualified and they also commented that they could see evidence of links between research undertaken by lecturers and the content of units, indicating a developing research-led practice. Teaching staff during interview provided illuminating examples of research-informed teaching

2.38   The College's emphasis on teaching and learning is very much the heart of its academic orientation and operation.

2.39   The review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the evidence yields clear and copious evidence that learning and teaching are developing and dynamic College activities, in which professional development and research are also clearly supported.

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

2.40   The College's Strategic Plan has been designed in terms of the enhancement of student learning. The College recognises that student development and achievement requires strategic investment in the appropriate staff who will not only deliver high-quality teaching, but also possess the further skills and commitment and belief to enhance student learning through high-levels of personal attention and availability. Within its strategic planning and student support facilities, the very closely coordinated pastoral system and recently developed Learning Support Department, now in its second year of operation, lie at the heart of academic life. Future planning includes physical plant improvements, internal infrastructure, further support measures by the Learning Support Department and the maintenance of bursary funds for students in need of financial support.

2.41   Funds are available to supplement the core teaching staff by the appointment of associate lecturers who also have roles as pastoral tutors and generous and often bespoke support is available for students with special needs. Special needs and disabilities concerns are addressed through the application process, for example in matters of mobility and sign translation. The Director of Practical Training is responsible for ensuring that the needs of students are met. Needs also may arise after admission and appropriate action is duly taken. The College offers a warm and welcoming environment. For example, an Open Day visitor found the lecture rooms to be less intimidating than those with which she was otherwise familiar.

2.42   As part of its widening participation, support and achievement endeavours, the College offers an Award programme which enables students with less well developed academic backgrounds to progress to a degree qualification. Similarly, the Equipped to Minister programme has been designed for students who do not wish to pursue the ministry in an advanced higher education qualification context. There is also a College award which is the first 60 credits of the certificate and attended alongside other degree students during the week.

2.43   The multilevel monitoring and review process in which awarding bodies and the College operate in shared tasks and activities, enable all parties to check the levels and quality of support available to students and how this compares with the national expectation and delivery.

2.44   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B4 to be met.

2.45   The review team considered the College's strategic plan, its support policies and a range of physical and human resource structures to determine its overall approach to student development and achievement. The review team also read minutes from relevant committees and met staff and students.

2.46   Student transition and progression are fundamental to student life and considerable emphasis is placed on the growth, disposition and formation of the individual as preparation for a life in the church and as personal development. These principles are developed throughout academic learning and vocational preparation and training. Student induction is organised during the Orientation Week in September, in which all the necessary elements including assessment are explained to enable a successful start to study.

2.47   Students work closely with the senior officers of the College. Student Representatives meet on a two weekly basis with the Principal and the Director of Operations during term time. The College is responsive to students' concerns whether related to academic matters or the environment more broadly. Students contribute to course reviews, programme reviews and the general work of the Quality Assurance Committee, where their inputs are highly valued. Students' views are considered vital to review groups and they may often take the lead in reporting back to the Academic Board on behalf of the Quality Assurance Committee.

2.48   A key area of feedback in the provision for students' development and achievement is their overall evaluation of each year's experience which is then considered and evaluated by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) Time has been allocated to improve the response towards this important student-centred initiative. The VLE has developed from annual student feedback and the reduction of the word count for one of the Professional and Ministry Practice Units, is a further example of the College's response to requests from the student body. The Staff Student Liaison Committee includes a student-led agenda with minutes recorded on VLE.

2.49   The Academic Board has undertaken a rolling schedule of reviews of all validated programmes offered by the College. In support of this, well-qualified external higher-education colleagues take part in these to gather the views of both current and former students and staff on their holistic experience. Following this procedure, recommendations are considered, and where appropriate, implemented by the Academic Board. The College devotes a considerable amount of time with students at the selection and pre-entry stage.

2.50   Ministers in Training (MiTs), are part of what the College describes as a 'comprehensive ministerial formation process' enabling a 360 degree perspective on their development both professionally and academically. Pastoral tutors undertake personal and spiritual development interviews with students at the beginning of each academic year. This is followed by informal interviews with the Principal in their first year and each MiT also has an annual review with their pastoral tutor, which in the final year is replaced by an exit interview with the Principal.

2.51   There are placement visits by the Director of Practical Training and Field Placement Tutors (FPTs) and visits by College tutors who observe students leading worship and preaching. These visits are reported on formally and also by the Placement Supervisor on the year as a whole and entered in student files. The files are used for further review and updates.

2.52   The Staff Away Day, the weekly Leadership Team meetings and monthly Teaching Staff Meetings also include ongoing review of the processes centred on student development. The level of student pastoral care is prominent, impressive and very thorough, whether in groups, on line, or out on placement. Named members of staff are made available for consultation.

2.53   The College has the technology to make its own audio recordings which will supplement and enhance the learning resources available through the new VLE. The library is capacious for study and desks are equipped with computers which are also provided in the Cloisters. The College lecture rooms feature data projectors, PCs, or laptops and DVD players, where students are permitted to record lectures. Wireless computer access is available throughout the College. Student engagement is obviously pursued very industriously by the College and the level of care in process is a high priority for all staff.

2.54   The review team concludes that Expectation B4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because a high-level of individual student support, pastoral care and encouragement

is supported by a range of developing resources, technologies and human resource availability in the daily lives of College students.

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

2.55 Students are engaged as partners in the College through a number of both informal and formal means. The new Students' Union Constitution sets out a clear definition of student engagement available to students and which provides students with information on student representatives and the role of the Union in student engagement. The QAA Review for Educational Oversight report recorded student engagement as an area of good practice and the College has since developed upon this, increasing student engagement. This includes the appointment of student representatives who have a defined role and purpose and are nominated and elected. The College operates an 'open door' policy so that students can engage with key members of staff such as pastoral tutors, chaplains the Principal and Vice Principal. Shared leisure activities and times such as daily chapel and meal times also enable students and staff to engage on an informal basis.

2.56 Students are represented on a number of committees/groups for the purposes of quality assurance at all levels. These include the College Council, the Academic Board, the Quality Assurance Committee, and the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Monitoring Group.

2.57 There is a Staff-Student Liaison Committee at which students may raise issues, bring forward ideas and suggestions on behalf of the student body and respond to items brought forward by staff. Student representatives are expected to seek out the issues that are affecting the student learning experience and life within College through regular and pro-active liaison with the student body. Nominations for student representatives are made by the student body for up to five places and can include anyone studying on a programme at the College. Nominations are received by the end of the first semester of each academic year and election of student representatives normally takes place at the start of the second semester. Online students do not currently have an opportunity to be student representatives although issues concerning online students may be raised at committees.

2.58 Student representatives receive support in the form of fortnightly meetings with the Principal and Director of Operations, and the student voice appears widely valued by the College. There is an induction programmes for new student representatives which is conducted through a handover period with the previous appointees.

2.59 The Staff-Student Liaison Committee makes provision for all the College's students to attend. It is intended as a forum for students to raise issues and for disseminating information to students. Issues raised and feedback given through these meetings is actioned and then results are fed back to the students by the student representatives

2.60 Evaluation questionnaires are completed by students on units at the end of the year and exit interviews are also used to obtain student feedback on issues. An example of an enhancement resulting from such feedback is the new VLE and the decision to deliver unit content primarily via audio media.The recent inclusion of student representatives on the Quality Assurance Committee) provides a more formal basis students to engage with quality assurance matters including the opportunity to give feedback on the design of courses and programmes.

2.61 The College's policies and procedures would allow Expectation B5 to be met.

2.62   The review team considered a range of evidence including the self-evaluation document and the student submission, the Staff Student Liaison Committee Terms of Reference, the Academic Board terms of reference, the Quality Assurance Committee terms of reference and the Students' Union Constitution. The review team also read the Learning Resources Committee minutes, and further explored the application of these and the more informal procedures through meetings with the students and teaching staff.

2.63   Students are enthusiastic about the diverse means of engagement through both the formal and informal mechanisms to provide opportunities for feedback. Students feel that their opinion is valued by the College and can see changes to their programmes after voicing issues. There is a 'You said, we did' mechanism to ensure that actions are reported back to students.

2.64   The College is very responsive to informal feedback from students and the review team heard many examples of where students and staff are able to informally discuss issues. Other examples include the provision of heaters for bedrooms following complaints about the thermal ambience of the rooms, and an introduction of more extended teaching on human sexuality. In terms of the informal mechanisms, the students report a full awareness of the open door policy and how the general policy of openness and integration with the staff allows for informal engagement with staff through, for example, daily chapel. Both staff and students report and commend the inclusive environment of the College which fosters open discussion.

2.65   Both the College and student representatives acknowledge that it has been more challenging to represent the needs and feedback of online students. It is hope that this will be improved by the facilities of a new VLE supported by a member of staff who will have the responsibility for online learning feedback (meeting 2).

2.66   The review team concludes that expectation B5 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has in place clear and effective policies and procedures to engage students in the work of the College.

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

2.67   Responsibility for ensuring the reliability and validity of assessment decisions rests with the awarding bodies although College conducts all assessments. Assessment regulations and expectations about assessment are clearly set out by the relevant awarding body.

2.68   For the University of Wales programmes, the College is subject to the University's Academic Regulations, Assessment Protocols for Degrees and Code of Practice. For taught degrees, clear guidance on these documents is provided in the detailed Taught Degrees Handbook. University of Manchester programmes are subject to the relevant university regulations and the University provides clear guidance on these. The guidance covers the full range of assessment considerations including assessment design and intended learning outcomes, feedback, marking and moderation, plagiarism and academic malpractice, and conduct of assessments. University of Chester programmes are subject to the university's regulations and procedures for research degrees.

2.69   The College has developed its own Teaching, Learning and Assessment Framework. This sets out the key principles relating to assessment including its pedagogical significance, the commitment of the College to giving feedback within a reasonable timeframe and the need to formulate assessment tasks that are aligned with programme and modular learning outcomes and teaching activities, relevant to the programme and needs of students, fair as opportunities to demonstrate learning achievements, and appropriate to unit ratings.

2.70   External examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies and are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the learning outcomes of the relevant units are met through the set assessment tasks. The University of Wales regulations require the College to undertake internal scrutiny of assessments before sending them to the external examiner for approval.

2.71   There is a prior learning procedure which requires detailed mapping of the outcomes of prior certificated learning against the units/units from which the student is requesting exemption which is submitted to the relevant awarding body for approval.

2.72   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B6 to be met.

2.73   The review team read documentation provided by the College, including the awarding bodies' regulations, College policies, procedures and associated documentation and external examiners reports. The review team also met students, senior, teaching and support staff of the College.

2.74   The College ensures that the regulations of the awarding bodies are adhered to. The College's implementation of the University of Wales regulations is overseen by a moderator who chairs the Board of Examiners and submits an annual report. In the case of the University of Manchester regulations, oversight is by the Collaborative Academic Adviser

(CAA) and the Collaborative Partnership Administrative Officer who both attend Boards of Examiners. The CAA visits the College annually and submits an annual report. No indications of serious concerns have been expressed by the awarding bodies and the reports show progress on actions raised in a previous year, The University of Manchester noted that a number of minor issues which had been raised in 2013-14 had been addressed by the College

2.75   Assessment of students' work is only undertaken by staff recognised by the awarding bodies as qualified to do so and staff development includes a staff training programme that features aspects of assessments including ensuring assessment is appropriate to the learning outcomes it is assessing and to the volume of credit being assessed and on ensuring that feedback reflects the marking criteria and the learning outcomes being assessed. The appointment of examiners and arrangement of oral examinations for the University of Chester programmes is entirely the responsibility of the University and these examinations take place at its premises.

2.76   There is a detailed and well-considered moderation and second-marking process which makes it clear what falls within the scope of the process and the parameters within which the first marker and moderator must work.

2.77   Staff are encouraged to vary the types of assessments they provide and to review and consider modifications annually, including taking account of comments by external examiners. Peer review incorporates review of assessments and sharing of good practice in relation to assessment practices and feedback.

2.78   The College provides timely, extensive and full feedback on summative assessments. Formative feedback is given on the undergraduate University of Manchester programmes. Tutors are given guidance on this and have an optional form which they may use for this purpose. For other programmes formative feedback may take a variety of forms, for example there may be instantaneous formative feedback in seminars or oral or written feedback on written work. Online feedback is currently in written format, but the College is intending to introduce some oral feedback for online students once the new VLE is in place. The timescale for the turnaround for formative assessment is the same as for summative assessment.

2.79   Student Handbooks provide students with an overview of assessment including the regulations, marking criteria and how to avoid plagiarism. Students report that they have a good understanding of these. Students are also introduced to the principles by which assessments are marked and to the nature of good academic practice through the study skills teaching and induction. Student feedback shows that students are almost unanimous in considering that assessments are appropriate, that they become more challenging as they progress through their course and that feedback is timely and helpful.

2.80   Good academic practice is illustrated to students and is reinforced by subject tutors, during the first year in particular. Consultations are available to students where practice needs improvement and there are established policies and processes for dealing with academic malpractice/unfair practice. These policies and procedures, which have been developed internally, are closely modelled on those of the awarding bodies.

2.81   The College has a Learning Support department and there is a procedure in place to meet the needs of the College's diverse student population which provides guidelines for making reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities and additional learning needs. The Learning Support Unit provides guidance on academic malpractice, and on approaches to assessment as well as providing support for students with additional learning needs. One of its three staff is a dyslexia specialist and is able to provide particular support for dyslexic students.

2.82 Staff have a good understanding of the mapping procedure for students applying for exemption from units through the prior learning procedure. In addition, the College has introduced an Award Programme for applicants without traditional entry qualifications. It sees this as part of its responsibility for widening participation. Students who successfully complete the Award Programme are awarded 60 credits which they are able to transfer to an undergraduate programme.

2.83 External examiners reports consistently express satisfaction in relation to academic standards and appropriateness of assessment instruments. They also praise the rigour of the marking and the appropriate use of the full range of marks. The production of a unit report by second markers is particularly commended by one external examiner.

2.84 The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has developed effective and thoughtful procedures for assessment of students and for the recognition of prior learning while working within the clearly defined responsibilities of the awarding bodies.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.85   External examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies. They consult the College regarding possible nominees as well as drawing on their own networks of knowledge. External examiners are sought with specialist knowledge and relevant experience. Formal appointment letters are sent to examiners which inform them clearly of their roles and responsibilities, the awarding bodies' expectations regarding duties and attendance at Boards of Examiners. Guidance and handbooks for external examiners are issued by all awarding bodies.

2.86   The College follows awarding bodies' procedures for external examining and the external examiner process. The College maintains a policy on external examiners' reports, which includes receipt, dissemination and any necessary action arising out of reports. Responsibility for these matters resides with the Academic Board. The meetings of the external examiners and of the Joint Board of Studies provide the appropriate forum where the College checks the satisfaction expressed by the authors of the reports with the College's response to any recommendations made.

2.87   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B7 to be met.

2.88   The review team read external examiner reports, their commentaries on good practice, agreements made between the awarding bodies and the College, their stipulations and guidance regarding the duties and expectations of external examiners. The review team held interviews with senior and teaching staff.

2.89   The University of Manchester designates one of the four subject-specialist examiners as a programme external examiner for all programmes. It also allocates the Chair of the Board of Examiners (an experienced member of the College staff) to the task of inducting new external examiners.

2.90   The University of Wales has established a framework and set of principles for the maintenance of standards for the duties of external examiners, which are set out in the Taught Degrees Handbook. The University engages a member of its own registry staff to induct new external examiners. The University of Chester allocates one external examiner for the review of the modular component of the DMin programme. For the University of Manchester, external examiners for each programme are appointed on the recommendation of the Senate

2.91   External examiners produce timely reports to the awarding bodies and are seen by the College who draft responses and implement necessary action. The University of Chester summarises actionable matter from the external examiners' reports and distributes these to the College. External examiners are asked to give their recommendations concerning good practice and areas for possible enhancement. There is liaison between the College and awarding bodies on matters raised in external examiners' reports which are discussed, as appropriate, with College staff and at relevant meetings. College responses to external examiners' reports are thorough and incisive.

2.92   The College can seek advice from an external examiner should a mark be difficult to agree internally, or if a student disputes a mark or comment on an essay or assignment. An example of such as case was provided in the meeting with teaching staff. Final decisions

are always taken by the relevant Board of Examiners. New or revised assessments are subject to external examiners' approval.

2.93   External examiners are asked to approve assessments in advance before teaching begins, and the University of Wales approves assignments in advance. External examiners may arrive a full day or more prior to meetings of the Board of Examiners to discuss issues, such as the curriculum, assessment strategies and other matters. College staff have found this process extremely instructive and helpful to the development of academic subjects. College teaching staff have themselves undertaken duties as external examiners.

2.94   Quality and standards procedures, examination boards and the external examiners for all awarding bodies ensure that classification of students' achievement is judged on the basis of student performance in relation to the set intended learning outcomes. External examiner's reports are available to students and the College. External examiners are complementary about the College and have commented positively on teaching and student support, forms of assessment and feedback, the quality of internal examining, academic and pastoral supervision, learning progression, scrupulousness and fairness. External examiners also confidently assert that the best students can 'hold their own anywhere'.

2.95   The College recognises the input of external examiners as being hugely important to its work. The review team found strong evidence for the College's confident engagement with external examiners.

2.96   The review team concludes that Expectation B7 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College makes scrupulous use of external examiners to the profitable gain of students, staff and the academic well-being of programmes, their delivery and evaluation.

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

2.97   Responsibility for annual monitoring and periodic review is shared between the College and its awarding bodies although the College must comply with each respective awarding body's processes. The monitoring and review processes of the awarding bodies and their operation within the College are set out in section A3.3.

2.98   Within the parameters of the awarding bodies' processes, the College undertakes its own monitoring and review activities. A key mechanism for this is feedback from students in the form of unit review by which students complete evaluation questionnaires both at the end of each unit and at the end of the year. Tutors also provide an evaluation form which includes a response to student feedback at the end of each unit. The student evaluation forms are then reviewed by the Quality Assurance Committee whose role is to identify areas of special concern, to identify and promote examples of good practice and to make specific recommendations for action to the Academic Board. The Quality Assurance Committee reports to the Academic Board twice a year. Students also provide feedback via fortnightly meetings between the student representatives, the Principal and the Director of Operations. Feedback is provided to students on issues raised by them at the Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings of which all students are members and by means of 'You said, we did' communications.

2.99   Programmes are reviewed annually by Course Directors who produce an annual report for Academic Board. These reports include statistical information on student numbers and examination results and cover matters such as admissions, staffing, resources, course management and curriculum. This is a separate process to the reviewing of individual units. The annual reports do not incorporate details of the student feedback on the individual units which make up the programme (see paragraph 2.98) or identify matters students have raised although they do refer to the feedback process

2.100   The College undertakes its own internal periodic review of subject disciplines or of whole programmes. The College's Policy for Internal Programme Review sets out a periodic review process whereby all programmes are reviewed every five years by a panel appointed by the Quality Assurance Committee which must include an external member. Reviews have taken place in respect of in-service and taught master's programmes. A quinquennial review of research degrees took place in 2014-15. An internal review of undergraduate programmes took place in 2010 and a further review of the BA programme is planned in 2016-17.

2.101   The College has a composite action plan which includes actions arising out of external reviews and reports and also the results of internal reviews. The actions on the plan are monitored by the relevant person or committee which is identified within the plan.

2.102   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B8 to be met.

2.103   The review team read documentation provided by the College, including their policies and procedures and the terms of reference of committees, minutes of meetings, reports and action plans and had meetings with students and senior and teaching staff of the College.

2.104   The Quality Assurance Committee, which reports to Academic Board, is tasked with enabling the Academic Board to maintain the quality and standards of the College. It also has two external members. This externality has contributed to the good practice in section A3.4.

2.105   Periodic Reviews of programmes are initiated by the awarding body under a cyclical period of review. Course evaluations take place in the College primarily be means of student evaluation questionnaires which are considered at the Quality Assurance Committee and a unit action plan is drawn up and this is monitored by the Committee The tutor unit evaluation forms require the tutors to indicate whether they have taken into account suggestions made by students and the Quality Assurance Committee during the previous evaluation. It is the task of Programme Leaders to ensure that any actions are taken as a result of this process.

2.106   The review team heard that actions had been taken as a result of these mechanisms, with students giving many examples of changes made as a result of their feedback. These range from changes to content of units and the credit values of units to improvements in physical resources such as outdoor lighting for the benefit of the personal safety of students. Student feedback has also informed the development of the new VLE and this is an ongoing iterative process. Students expressed satisfaction with the College's response to feedback and have indicated confidence in the College's communication and the 'closing of the loops'.

2.107   Annual course reports go directly to Academic Board. These reports could be strengthened by the inclusion of an action plan so that the College can holistically identify College actions. The review team **recommends** that, by June 2017, the College ensures that the institution-wide annual monitoring process resolves and records all actions within an appropriate timeframe.

2.108   Periodic internal review reports are considered by the Quality Assurance Committee before going to Academic Board. An example of the internal review process is the College's Quinquennial Course Review of Research Degrees which took place in 2014-15. The review committee included two external members and their report was considered at the Quality Assurance Committee in March 2015 before consideration by Academic Board in April of that year. As a result of the report an item was added to the academic action plan.

2.109   There is evidence of monitoring and review activity throughout the College at all levels, although the College acknowledges that there are no systematic processes in place for reviewing the effectiveness of their monitoring and review processes as a whole. The review team **recommends** that, by June 2017, the College makes provision for the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of annual monitoring across the institution.

2.110   The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. The associated level of risk is moderate because the College carries out its responsibilities for monitoring and review diligently but could be more systematic in its approach to evaluating their effectiveness and could strengthen the approach to annual monitoring.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.111   The College has clear complaints and appeal processes. These are made available to students through appropriate channels and is aligned with the awarding bodies' policies.

2.112   For appeals, the College operates a Verification and Appeals procedure for all undergraduate and master's programmes. For complaints, the College has a Resolution and Grievance procedure which is set out in the Student Handbook and this has been superseded by a new Student Complaints procedure. The College operates a three-stage process, comprising of informal, formal and final appeal. Once this has been exhausted, the student is able to take his or her case to the awarding bodies. The complaints and appeals processes are laid out in the Student handbooks. Research student are subject to the same procedure up until thesis submission when an appeal is dealt with directly by the University of Chester or the University of Wales under their regulations for Research Degree Appeals

2.113   The College's Governance Group is currently undertaking a review of College policies, including those relating to academic appeals and complaints, in the light of the requirements of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. As a result, a new Student Complaints Procedure is currently being drafted which sets out a timescale of three months for the complainant to raise an issue, resolution of an informal complaint within fifteen days, and resolution of a formal complaint within twenty working days. Should the issue be not resolved, the student has one final opportunity for the review of the complaint and a response will be given within twenty working days. All students have a final right of appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Students seeking help for appeals and complaints may seek advice from the Director of Operations.

2.114   There are specific procedures for appeals against the decision of an Academic Malpractice/Unfair practice panel. Pastoral tutors are available to give advice to students who wish to lodge an appeal or complaint. For research students, those student wishing to transfer from an MPhil to a PhD are permitted to appeal against a decision of a progression panel to recommend that they may not be transferred, or to recommend that their transfer is deferred pending further work.

2.115   The College's policies and procedures would allow Expectation B9 to be met.

2.116   The review team considered a range of evidence including the appeals and complaints procedures, the information provided to students in the student handbooks and read relevant information such as minutes from meetings dealing with complaints. The review team further explored the application of these through meetings with students, teaching and senior staff.

2.117   Students with whom the team met were aware of the appeals and complaints procedures in their handbooks and that this was also covered at induction. They were not aware of the admission appeals process as they had never required it. However, they were confident that they would know where to find it if needed.

2.118   Students and staff are aware of issues being resolved through the informal routes such as through the Student Representatives or more formally through the Staff Student

Liaison Committee. Students are confident that this is a very effective mechanism to raise complaints and have them dealt with, an example of which was an amendment to the word count of an assessment for a unit.

2.119   The College keeps detailed records on each appeal and formal complaint that is made which sets out the action taken on each stage and at the end of each year the Director of Operations prepares an annual report to the Governing Body.

2.120   The review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has in place policies and procedures to deal with appeals and complaints.

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

2.121   Student placements are at the heart of the College's work as part of the delivery of ministerial training. All ministers in training (MiTs) are allocated a main placement integral to their training. Most placements are arranged within a local church context, or occasionally a para-church organisation appropriate to students' ministerial intentions. Placements are organised in accordance with the Placement Protocols under the responsibility of the Director of Practical Training.

2.122   Student oversight is the responsibility of the Placement Supervisor, who is responsible to the Director of Practical Training, or a Field Placement Tutor. Either the Placement Supervisor with the support of a Field Placement Tutor meet all prospective supervisors and remains in contact with them. Placements are subject to informal risk assessment and clear expectations of both students and placement providers are established prior to placement. The Director of Practical Training surveys a range of areas when visiting new church placements and students allocated to placements undergo Disclosure and Barring Service checking.

2.123   The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation B5 to be met.

2.124   The review team read all placement documents and reports and met placement staff, including supervisors and students currently undergoing various categories of vocational practice.

2.125   Full-time church-based students are expected to spend three days in their church placement and three days engaged in their academic study each week. Up to eight hours of placement each week are expected from full-time college-based students and a pro-rata placement is organised for part-time ministerial students. Supervisors complete an annual report for student reflection with their pastoral tutor, or Principal in the final year. These annual reports form part of the annual review process.

2.126   There is an annual Supervisors' Day Conference to enable placement supervision discussion and monitoring. The event keeps supervisors up to date concerning all aspects of academic work and College life. Placements are supported by weekly professional ministry and practice sessions in the College and also by pastoral group meetings. Placement support groups may involve church leaders, members of the congregation and external members of church who are members of other churches.

2.127   College pastoral groups meet on a weekly basis and provide a helpful informal and confidential support network for students in training. Students and their spouses, where relevant, have greatly appreciated the pastoral groups. Within the support arrangements, five placement tutors meet with students twice a year and all five meet once a year. During the placement period students may be referred to College academics, to the College counselling service, or to local support as and when necessary.

2.128   Students with whom the review team met reported that staff are helpful in setting up placements and are supportive throughout. Bespoke placement arrangements are possible

and students are aware of the placement assessment requirements. Employers and placement colleagues spoke about the network of support available, wider community integration, the one-to-one mentoring, placement support group arrangements and the pastoral opportunities, for example, visits to the sick. Supervisors' assessment documentation is exemplary.

2.129   Ministers in training also undertake two short 'alternative placements', usually during their first and second summer. They are self-chosen with advice from the Director of Practical Training. In the first year, the placement is referred to as a 'church planting or pioneering opportunity' so that they gain experience of this kind of ministry. The second year involves an ecumenical placement enabling students to work alongside, and come under the supervision of a minister from a different denomination.

2.130   Placements are a vital aspect of professional training and are integral to academic study. The College undertakes this process with meticulous care and concern.

2.131   The review team concludes that Expectation B10 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the exemplary due diligence, management oversight and pastoral care are visible and seen to be working throughout the organisation and arrangement of vocational placements.

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

2.132   The College has offered the research degrees of MPhil and PhD validated by the University of Wales since 1992. In 2012, the University of Wales announced its intention to bring all its current awarding body arrangements to an end but has undertaken to continue to support students until they complete their programme. The partnership with the University of Chester includes a DMin degree as well as the MPhil and PhD. Since 2014 a split-site arrangement has been in place with the University of Manchester whereby the University of Manchester admits a small number of candidates as PhD students who have a main supervisor at the University of Manchester and a co-supervisor at the College.

2.133   The regulations and procedures for research degrees are those of the awarding bodies. For the University of Chester programmes, regulations and procedures are summarised in the programme handbooks. For the University of Wales programmes they are contained in the University's Code of Practice which is available to students on the College's website.

2.134   The College has research active staff and this is encouraged by initiatives including research leave after four consecutive years of service and by enabling staff to attend conferences. Most research students are part-time and the College has several initiatives to bring them together including an annual research seminar and DMin workshops three times a year. There are also weekly post-graduate research seminars which are recorded to enable students studying at a distance to benefit from them. MPhil, PhD and DMin students have an opportunity to present papers on their research in progress at these seminars.

2.135   Research students are represented on the Research Degrees Committee. A survey of research students concerning their experience of supervision was undertaken in 2014 the results of which were positive. There is considerable academic support for research students, the College has an excellent theological library of some 70,000 volumes and an annual budget of £30,000. It is kept updated with key items related to teaching and research topics. It is normally open six days per week. It also offers access to an expanding range of electronic resources including the EBSCO databases, Oxford Handbooks and other Oxford University Press volumes, and Cambridge Companions Online. In addition, students have access to the resources of their validating Universities.

2.136   The research activities of the College, including the MPhil and PhD programmes, are overseen by the Director of Postgraduate Research (DPR), assisted by the Assistant DPR and supported by a Research Administrator within the College Registry Team. All students are made aware that they may contact the DPR about any matter of concern related to their supervision or their programme more generally. The DPR and Assistant DPR work closely with the Director of In-Service Training who is responsible for the management of the DMin degree. There is sufficient supervisory standards in place across the different awarding bodies. The college and its awarding bodies provide regular and thorough supervisory training. An information sheet for supervisors sets out guidance on matters such as frequency of supervision, application process and attendance requirements.

2.137   There are numerous mechanisms in place for research student evaluation and feedback. There are opportunities to give informal verbal or written anonymous feedback on activities such as the research colloquium through the Research Degree Committee, and the annual feedback forms. Research students also initiated their own separate research student survey. There is also a complaints and appeals process.

2.138   The Quality Assurance Committee initiated a review of the Research Degrees over the period 2009-14 and the report was presented to Academic Board in May 2015. It strongly affirmed the College's research provision and had three recommendations. The first recommendation was for further supervisory training which was provided through an information sheet for supervisors. The second was to include a complaints procedure in student handbooks, which has now been updated. The third was to use discretion in the requirement of the Personal Development Record but with discretion given that some research students may be mature and already established in their careers.

2.139   The College's policies and the procedures would allow Expectation B11 to be met.

2.140   The review team considered the wide range of information available to research students including handbooks and relevant procedures (such as procedures for transfer from MPhil to PhD and the appeals procedure), as well as viewing information relating to regular activities such as the research colloquium, and seminars. The review team further tested the expectation in meetings with students and teaching staff. The review team was only able to meet with one PhD student during the review visit.

2.141   Effective governance arrangements allow oversight of postgraduate research degrees. From the evidence provided, the review team was able to see that the Research Degree Committee is taking an active overview of student research matters.

2.142   Postgraduate research students are satisfied with the information provided for them both pre-arrival and once they have commenced their programme. The process for approval of their research programme is clear and students are well integrated into the research environment through induction. Students reported an overall satisfaction with the research environment, noting that it was both lively and supportive, with research students reporting positively on supervision. Students highly regard the research seminars and the research colloquium, which is useful also for the more social aspects of studentship. With the dates being established well in advance this enables off site students to make travel and attendance arrangements to attend. Students are happy with the resources and, in particular, the library helpful and adequate.

2.143   Staff are enthusiastic about the research environment and are encouraged by student attendance at seminars, which are also open to and attended by postgraduate taught students which helps to encourage lively debate. Supervisors found the formal training useful, but also discussed the informal sharing of good practice and support received from the awarding bodies in terms of supervisory training.

2.144   The College has reduced teaching hours for staff where supervisory duties have increased, freeing up time for research students. Staff are granted study leave commitment and are supported to be members of professional bodies, all of which feeds into the research environment.

2.145   The review team concludes that expectation B11 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has in place clear arrangements for the supervision of research degrees and ensures an organised and nurturing research environment.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.147   All applicable Expectations have been met and the risk is judged low except for one which is moderate. Two recommendations are made covering one Expectation.

2.148   The recommendations arising from the Expectation indicate the College ensures that the institution-wide annual monitoring process resolves and records all actions within an appropriate timeframe and makes provision for the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of annual monitoring across the institution.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Information is available to prospective students in a variety of forms including through the College websites, published prospectus and open days. The College currently has two websites, the main College website which is the external interface to members of the public including prospective students and a second website for use by online students and online learning. The College's website is where both online learners and college attendees access the VLE, but it is also where the public and prospective students can learn more about the online programmes on offer. Both websites link to each other and are the primary means by which the College presents information for the public. A new integrated VLE will be launched in September 2016 as an internal facing information resource and the present outward facing websites will be combined on one centralised URL.

3.2 The College makes its vision and values available to all prospective students and College stakeholders through the website and by a published brochure. The College also publishes a short prospectus with limited information, which directs applicants to the website for further information such as prices and full course details. Current students receive an up to date handbook each year. Graduating students receive certificates and transcripts from the relevant validating partner and a Higher Education Achievement record. The Student Charter and Students' Union Constitution have recently been approved and students are aware of where to find these. The new integrated VLE and website will make information more accessible and clearer for prospective and current students.

3.3 The College has a Public Information Policy which sets out the responsibilities for the approval of different forms of external and internal information. Internal information such as policies and the Student Handbook are subject to sign off procedures by specific individuals. Policies that relate to students are commented upon by one or more of the student representatives. Individual tutors are responsible for the production of relevant materials and for maintaining quality and adherence to the schemes of work for online learning material. The Director of Spurgeon's Online will ensure that online materials are consistent with College policy with final responsibility for cross-College consistency resting with the Director of Studies.

3.4 The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation C to be met.

3.5 The review team considered the information available through both websites, as well as those in printed media such as the student handbooks and prospectus. The review team looked at the Public Information Policy as well as relevant minutes from meetings relating to its review. The review team tested the application of the sign off process in meetings with the support and senior staff, and explored how the information was viewed by students through meetings with students and attendance at the new VLE demonstration.

3.6 Students with whom the review team met reported confirmed that the information available through the websites and the handbooks was accurate, helpful and accessible

although the current website's interface is not particularly user friendly. It was expected that the new VLE will address this issue which has been developed following student feedback.

3.7   The Public Information Policy is currently being updated to reflect changes in the staffing structure of the College and a revised policy is due to be completed by September 2016.

3.8   The review team concludes that Expectation C is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has policies and procedures that ensures that public information is fit for purpose, up to date and accurate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.10   The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

3.11   The review team concludes that the quality of the Institute's information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

4   Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1   The internal governance structure is designed to ensure that good practice is recognised, disseminated and built upon and opportunities for improvement are identified and raised in a timely manner. There is a systematic process in place to collect student feedback in the form of unit review questionnaires completed at the end of each unit and end-of-year questionnaires. The end of year questionnaire includes questions on the curriculum and also on matters such as learning resources, placements, student representation, the provision of information and administrative matters such as the timetable. Tutors also provide an evaluation form which includes a response to student feedback at the end of each unit and also include questions on innovation and planned developments to the unit. In addition there are a number of other mechanisms by which students can provide feedback (see section B8). The Quality Assurance Committee routinely reviews the student evaluation questionnaires and their role includes identifying and promote examples of good practice and making specific recommendations for action to the Academic Board.

4.2   The College's other internal review mechanisms (see section B8) such as Quality Assurance Committee programme review groups are also focused on enhancing the student learning experience. The reports from these programme reviews conclude with recommendations and suggested innovations. These reports are considered by Academic Board.

4.3   The Academic Board reports to the Governors who oversee the College's Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is designed to ensure the enhancement of student learning opportunities and includes a comprehensive action plan which is monitored and reviewed by the Governors.

4.4   External examiners reports include comments and recommendations on good practice and opportunities to enhance the student learning experience. These reports are discussed between the College staff and the relevant awarding body and the College responds to all points made by the external examiners. Actions arising from external examiner reports are included in the academic action plan.

4.5   The College's policies and procedures would allow the Enhancement Expectation to be met.

4.6   The review team read documentation provided by the College, including their policies and procedures and the terms of reference of committees, minutes of meetings, reports and action plans and had meetings with students and senior, programme and support staff of the College.

4.7   A key strategic project to drive enhancement is investment in the VLE which will benefit both online and face-to-face students. It has been developed to respond to the student request for more flexibility and to allow for more creative assessment, more skills development and collaborative learning and more varied presentation of materials to reflect different learning styles. This initiative was the result of the systematic process of collecting and evaluating student feedback and is an iterative process with student feedback being used to ensure continuous improvement as the new system beds in.

4.8   An example of a proactive and strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities is the creation of the Learning Support Unit which supports the College's widening participation policy and provides support ranging from study skills and good academic practice, to pastoral support and support for students with additional learning needs.

4.9   The College uses the peer review process as a mechanism for identifying and disseminating good practice not only to review teaching but also learning and assessment materials and assessment practice. The extensive range of external expertise used by the College to enhance student learning opportunities has led to a feature of good practice as set out in Expectation A3.4

4.10   There was evidence from both students and staff of numerous examples of smaller but nevertheless important initiatives such as the dissemination of good practice in the giving of feedback to students, which arose out of the peer review process, the changes to the credit value of units in responses to student feedback and the opportunities for students to work abroad as a result of student feedback.

4.11   The College sees enhancement as central to its operations and has recently restructured to create a new role of Director of Studies who will be responsible for the academic direction of the College including opportunities to enhance the student learning experience.

4.12   The review team concludes that the Enhancement Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College has a systematic approach to identifying good practice as well as opportunities for further improvement which results in actions that positively impact on the quality of the student learning opportunities.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.14   The Expectation in this area is met.

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

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The provider is a specialist College offering vocational academic and research degrees and, as such, is focused on delivering courses which meet specific employment routes. Students are welcomed from a range of different backgrounds and share a range of experiences which enhance the undergraduate and postgraduate communities. The annual employment success of the College is high although it recognises that employability is always an area for increased enhancement.

5.2   Increasingly, students come to the College from different denominations to train for a variety of different ministries, whether paid, unpaid, full or part-time. This relates both to UK and overseas work. There are others whose attendance at the college is without any desired employment in Christian ministry, but in a confessional context and for their own personal and professional development and learning.

5.3   There is a high proportion of Ministers in Training (MiT) who are mature students, having followed earlier careers and often have well-developed work skills. The College expresses a desire to know more about how such existing skills can be affirmed, developed and deployed while the MiT is at the College and beyond. Whether for future employment or otherwise, employability and transferable skills are now a required consideration in the approval process of all unit descriptors approved by the University of Manchester. Students develop skills for employment which include, for example, communication (written and oral), leadership, working in groups, and other advantageous cultural benefits.

5.4   There are several categories of studentship which are all related to employability: full-time church-based students (Baptist Union (BU) and Non-Baptist Union), who normally fulfil the role of a part-time minister in the church either working as the sole minister or alongside a senior minister, and part-time MiTs who study at the College one day a week. These students are normally full-time ministers in a church, released one day a week to study for a degree in theology and can also follow a bi-vocational pattern, three days a week in employment, one day a week in College, one day in their placement and one-day in study. Full-time College-based students (Baptist Union and Non-Baptist Union) are either on the vocational pathway (with placement) or on the non-vocational pathway. Vocational students are required to work up to eight hours a week unpaid in a supervised placement.

5.5   Other types of student are: online students, other part-time students, master's and doctoral students.

5.6   The College places great emphasis on placement churches and supervisors so as to ensure that an all-round experience of ministry is obtained. In their placement, MiTs are practitioners developing their skills and knowledge in accordance with the BU guidelines. A range of careers are available to graduates including an academic life, a career in a church via the BU settlement process, other church appointments and appointments in the secular world. The College recognises that more formal career advice will need to be available for future non-vocational students, especially if there is growth in this recruitment pathway. Vacancies which come to the attention of the College are passed on to students.

5.7   Employers with whom the review team met were unanimous in their view that the College prepares students well for ministry offering a good balance of academic and vocational study. Employers believed they worked positively with the College towards preparing students and graduates in character formation, maturity of faith, skills development, inter-personal relationships, theological reflection, cultural diversity and

adaptability. Advice on employability for students who hold a degree in Religious Studies of Theology is also provided by the Higher Education Academy and by Precision Consultancy.

5.8 Sustaining good practices towards long-term ministry and employment that includes time management and developing a healthy work/life balance are College priorities. Students are encouraged towards the development of life-long accountability. Ministerial students are particularly encouraged to work in partnership with other local Baptist churches and to network with other church denominations as one means of militating against leading a solitary way of life in the ministry. When asked whether pastoral groups were helpful in preparing students for future employment 85.7 per cent of students felt this was the case.

5.9 Students are positive about the ways employability has been embedded into their courses, mainly through placements. Employers invited to contribute to the delivery of courses materials are said by students to offer a variable degree of useful information and are generally helpful and positive. Though involved with the work of the College variously, employers expressed an interest in being more active as partners in process. Employability is a significant aspect of the College's provision, in which strong vocational development is multifaceted. This was clearly in evidence to the review team.

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 units) 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 unit 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**.

VLE (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.