

Higher Education Review of St Vincent College

March 2015

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at St Vincent College. The review took place from 26 to 27 March 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Maxina Butler-Holmes
- Sylvia Hargreaves
- Laurence McNaughton (student reviewer)

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

In reviewing St Vincent 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 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106

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

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

Amended judgement August 2016

Introduction

In March 2015, St Vincent College underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in judgements that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies, and the quality of information about learning opportunities, meet UK expectations. However, the quality and enhancement of student learning opportunities both require improvement to meet UK expectations.

Negative judgements are subject to a formal follow-up by QAA, which involves the monitoring of an action plan produced by the College in response to the report findings.

The College published an action plan in October 2015 describing how it intended to address the recommendations identified in the review, and has been working over the last eight months to demonstrate how it has implemented that plan.

The follow-up process included three progress updates and culminated in the review team's scrutiny of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence, along with a one-day visit on 9 June 2016 with one reviewer. During the visit, the team met the Principal, senior and academic staff, employers and students to discuss progress and triangulate the evidence base received over the preceding months.

The visit confirmed that the recommendations relating to the quality and enhancement of student learning opportunities had been successfully addressed. Actions against recommendations relating to the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies had also been completed on schedule and contributed to the progress against the quality and enhancement of student learning opportunities, which both received negative judgements.

QAA Board decision and amended judgements

The review team concluded that the College had made sufficient progress to recommend that the judgements be amended. The QAA Board accepted the team's recommendation and the judgements are now formally amended. The College's judgements are now as follows.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of 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.

The review can be considered to be signed off as complete.

Findings from the follow-up process

The team found that the College had made progress against the recommendations as follows.

Recommendation - Expectation B10

The College now has formal agreements and communication with students' employers. Documentation, including handbooks, agreements, checklists and an employer database, enable the College to ensure that the workplace settings are appropriate. The College also invites employers and mentors to open days and workshops on a regular basis. The College

routinely checks that employment settings are monitored by Ofsted and now maintains a record of contact details of employers and mentors, and monitors the return of employer checklists. There is now an Employer and Mentor Handbook, which is clear and informative. Meetings at the start of the programme, and during open days and workshops, have led to improved communication and understanding between the College and employers. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Expectations B10 and B4

An Employer and Mentor Handbook now informs those employers who act as mentors. Checklists and spreadsheets enable the College to confirm that all students have workplace mentors. Mentor training and regular invitations for mentors to participate in open days and workshops are designed to enhance communication as well as improving mentors' knowledge of the curriculum and the quality of support they can offer to students in the workplace. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Expectations B8, A3.3 and B7

The College has restructured its senior and middle management and updated the College Quality Strategy and quality cycle, including the thorough consideration of higher education issues, programme reviews and external examiner reports at all stages of the cycle. The Higher Education Management Committee (HEMC) and the self-assessment reports (SARs) remain the College's main quality assurance processes, but they have now been strengthened through routine student participation and the Higher Education Strategy being a standing agenda item at the HEMC. In addition, senior management routinely discusses higher education issues at meetings throughout the year. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Expectations B5 and Enhancement

Student representatives are now trained and formally invited to meetings of the HEMC. HEMC meetings are scheduled to accommodate the part-time higher education student attendance pattern. Minutes of meetings show student representatives' involvement in discussions, with examples of improvements achieved. Student representatives lead meetings with student groups and feed student opinion through the quality processes of the College and awarding body. Students attend focus groups for the Internal Quality Review (IQR) process and will also feed into the final annual programme review. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Enhancement

As described under earlier recommendations, the College has taken steps to strengthen student representation and the processes for programme monitoring and review. This enables the College to more effectively identify opportunities for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. However, there is still scope for the College to improve the way that its monitoring and review processes systematically identify opportunities for enhancement that are consistent with the strategic priorities. The College has produced a number of higher education-specific documents, including a Higher Education Strategy, which contains a number of clear priorities to secure internal progression for students, provide high quality teaching and learning, and widen participation from under-represented groups. In addition, the Quality Strategy establishes the processes for achieving these priorities through quality mechanisms, notably IQR, increased student participation in decision making, and through higher education-specific observation of teaching. The College shares good practice with the awarding body and partner colleges, and through action planning by teaching staff and professional development. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about St Vincent College

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

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

Good practice

The QAA review team did not identify any features of **good practice** at St Vincent College.

Recommendations

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

By September 2015:

- formalise arrangements with students' employers to ensure the suitability of workplace settings on the foundation degree programme (Expectation B10).

By January 2016:

- develop the student representation system to ensure effective student involvement in the College's quality assurance and enhancement processes (Expectations B5 and Enhancement)
- strengthen the operation of higher education quality processes to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review (Expectations B8, A3.3, and B7)
- ensure the adequacy and consistency of support for students in workplace settings on the foundation degree programme (Expectations B10 and B4).

By July 2016:

- develop and implement a strategic and systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team did not **affirm** any actions that St Vincent College is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The small cohort of students ensures there are many opportunities to engage with tutors and other staff on an informal basis. Students also have opportunities to complete unit evaluations, course and College surveys, and attend the course conferences. While acknowledging the challenges presented by part-time attendance, the student representation system is underdeveloped and there is no formal training for student representatives to carry out their roles. There is also a lack of engagement with course team meetings or formal committees either at the College or the University of Portsmouth. This limits the opportunities for students to engage more fully as partners in quality assurance and enhancement.

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

About St Vincent College

St Vincent College (the College) was established in Gosport in 1987. It was previously a naval training establishment and a school. It describes itself as an open access community Sixth Form College with a mission to 'inspire and support all our students to achieve their full potential'. As a peninsula, the Gosport area does not have a good transport infrastructure and this discourages many adults from travelling outside their immediate residential area.

At the time of its Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) by QAA in 2010, the College had 82 part-time higher education students. The College now has 36 part-time students. The fall in numbers is a result of the College no longer offering the Level 5 Diplomas in Teaching Skills for Life and a significant reduction in numbers on the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education/Professional Certificate in Education (PGCE/PCE) course.

The College offers two higher education courses. The PGCE/PCE is a distance-learning course offered on behalf of the University of Greenwich. The three-year, part-time Foundation Degree in Early Years Care and Education is offered on behalf of the University of Portsmouth. The College is in the early stages of discussions with the University of Portsmouth to offer a BA (Hons) in Early Years Care and Education and a Foundation Degree in Learning Support.

The College has identified a number of key challenges facing its higher education provision including: high levels of local economic and social deprivation mixed with low levels of aspiration; the impact on recruitment to the PGCE/PCE course of university fees and deregulation of mandatory teaching qualifications for further education teachers; the potential impact of the reduction in local government bursary support on recruitment to the foundation degree; and funding constraints in the sixth form sector.

The College has made some progress with the recommendations made in the IQER. Staff continue to have a good awareness and understanding of relevant external reference points, resources are satisfactory, and there is continuing contact with staff at the awarding bodies. However, the lack of institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review, for example through the Higher Education Managers Committee (HEMC), has resulted in a recommendation in the current review. There has been no progress in widening the membership of this committee.

In addition, there has been little progress in the formal engagement of students as partners in quality assurance and enhancement.

Explanation of the findings about St Vincent 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:

- 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 The College's higher education programmes have been developed by the University of Portsmouth and the University of Greenwich, and approved to be delivered by the College on a franchised basis. The responsibilities of the College for maintaining academic standards are set out in the relevant partnership agreements, policies, and programme specifications. Ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of programmes offered by the College lies with the awarding bodies concerned. Therefore, the awarding bodies ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) are met and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* are considered as part of their programme design, approval and review processes. The PGCE is also underpinned by Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training, while the other programme is an Early Years sector-endorsed foundation degree. The College's processes meet Expectation A1 in theory.

1.2 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining partnership and collaborative agreements, validation and review documents, programme annual monitoring reviews, external examiners' reports, programme specifications, and programme approval documentation. The team also met students, senior staff, and teaching staff.

1.3 Overall, the evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. External examiners' reports show that the College appropriately acknowledges relevant reference points in its teaching, learning and assessment practices, and that academic standards are being adequately maintained. The team heard of staff involvement in the initial conception of the foundation degree and during periodic reviews of both programmes. Students whom the team met demonstrated a clear understanding of programme specifications and what it takes to achieve their award. Academic staff were clear about the process for programme monitoring in line with the awarding body's regulations. Staff also demonstrated a good understanding of relevant external reference points, including occupational and professional standards, and how these inform the programme specifications.

1.4 While the awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility through their own regulatory frameworks for ensuring that the relevant external reference points are adhered to, there is clear evidence that the College effectively manages its own responsibilities for doing this within its partnership agreements. This is confirmed through a variety of mechanisms including reviews by the awarding bodies and the conclusions from external examiners' reports. Therefore, the review team determines that Expectation A1 is met in both design and practice and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.5 The regulatory frameworks of the awarding bodies determine academic standards and award of credit for each programme. The College works within the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding bodies as outlined in the partnership agreements. The College demonstrates its awareness of, and engagement with, these frameworks and regulations through a variety of mechanisms, including approval and periodic review processes, programme monitoring and review, and external examiners' reports. The College's processes meet Expectation A2.1 in theory.

1.6 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining academic frameworks and regulations, partnership agreements, programme specifications, approval and revalidation reports, programme monitoring and review documentation, and external examiners' reports. The team also met senior staff, teaching staff and representatives from the awarding bodies.

1.7 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. Staff whom the review team met were very clear about the respective responsibilities of the College and the Universities, and it is evident that the College adheres closely to the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding bodies. Active participation at partnership events, progression and award boards, University meetings, and evidence from external examiners' reports demonstrate the College's awareness of, and adherence to, the frameworks and regulations. In addition, staff at the College are kept up to date with any developments through regular meetings with the Adult Education Manager.

1.8 The awarding bodies have responsibility for academic frameworks and regulations. Programme reviews and external examiners' reports clearly indicate that the College operates effectively to uphold the frameworks and regulations. Additionally, there are well defined lines of responsibility between the College and its awarding bodies, and a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities. Therefore, within the context of the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies, the review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met both in theory and in practice, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.9 The responsibility for producing and maintaining the definitive record for each programme and qualification, in the form of programme specifications, lies with the awarding bodies. Programme specifications are made available to students through the University of Portsmouth's Student Handbook, course handbooks, and on the virtual learning environments (VLEs) and websites of the College and its awarding bodies. The specifications detail the awards' title and intermediate exit awards, as well as relevant external reference points including Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. The University of Portsmouth outlines the course details within the programme specification to include the course profile, aims, intended learning outcomes, awards, course structure and assessment requirements. The University of Greenwich provides the College with the Network Colleges Trainee Handbook which includes the programme specification, as well as the Professional Standards which underpin the programme specification. The information provided through the course handbooks describes the intended learning outcomes of each of the units studied along with the learning outcomes of the programme as a whole, as described in full in the programme specification. Unit handbooks also state the aims and learning outcomes for each unit to be studied. These approaches allow the College to meet Expectation A2.2 in theory.

1.10 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining programme specifications, course handbooks, and the VLE and websites. The team also met teaching and support staff, and students.

1.11 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. The review team saw evidence that programme specifications clearly articulate aims, learning outcomes and assessment requirements. Assessment schedules and requirements are published in the course handbook for each year group, as well as online, and students confirmed that they are made available during induction at the start of each academic year. Students whom the team met demonstrated a clear understanding of programme and unit specifications and confirmed their awareness of where to find them electronically and in hard copy.

1.12 Staff at the College are clearly aware of the requirements set out in programme specifications and use this to ensure that programme information is aligned with the approved documentation. Staff whom the team met also described how the information in the programme and unit specifications inform their practice.

1.13 Students and teaching staff are able to propose changes to programmes and, if agreed, these are discussed with the relevant University and with the other colleges in the consortium through network meetings. If agreed, these changes then follow the awarding body's procedures for modifications to programmes. Any changes are then published in the definitive records. Staff whom the team met said that they had not been involved with making modifications to their programmes but understood the process.

1.14 Within its partnership agreements, the College fulfils its responsibilities for this Expectation. Staff understand and make appropriate use of programme specifications to

inform their teaching practice. Students understand programme and unit specifications and know where to access them. The review team therefore concludes that the College meets Expectation A2.2 both in theory and in practice, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.15 The College's awarding bodies are responsible for the initial setting and approving of academic standards. The awarding bodies have approved the College for the delivery of the higher education courses. The University of Portsmouth approved the foundation degree under its Curriculum Framework and the Partnership Agreement defines each party's responsibilities. A successful Collaborative Partnership Review was conducted in 2014 which re-approved the College as a delivery partner for a further six years. The University of Greenwich Memorandum of Agreement defines the responsibilities for programme approval and the assurance of academic standards. The College was granted re-approval in 2012. The College uses a pro forma for the initial approval of any new course which includes the outline business case, resourcing and marketing considerations. Programme development then progresses through discussion with the relevant awarding body and, ultimately, to academic approval through the awarding body's processes. The oversight provided by the awarding bodies' processes and the adherence to the relevant policies and procedures enable the College, in theory, to meet Expectation A3.1.

1.16 The review team tested the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining appropriate University policies, partnership agreements, reports, programme reviews, and minutes of relevant meetings relating to programme approval. The team also met the Principal, teaching staff, and senior staff, including representatives from the awarding bodies.

1.17 The review team found that the processes for programme approval work effectively. The team saw evidence that teaching staff contributed to the University of Greenwich's Critical Appraisal and Programme Review document in 2012. Similarly, the Adult Area Manager and Course coordinator participated with subject peers during the programme review with the University of Portsmouth. The outcomes of the respective awarding bodies' review processes were to confirm the College as a provider institution and to re-approve the relevant programmes. The oversight for the follow-up on recommendations following approval events is the responsibility of the Adult Area Manager, in collaboration with course teams, and the team confirmed that these recommendations were briefly discussed in Higher Education Management Committee (HEMC) meetings.

1.18 There has been no requirement for a formal process within the College to support the design, development and approval of new higher education provision as the two programmes were approved several years ago. The review team saw evidence of a brief pro forma that the College uses when adding any new course to its provision. The team heard about preliminary discussions taking place with the University of Portsmouth to develop a bachelor's progression from the foundation degree. It was, however, too early in the process for the College to demonstrate a formally planned approach.

1.19 Within the context of the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies, the evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities for programme approval to ensure that each of its qualifications is allocated to the appropriate level of the FHEQ. To do this, the College works closely with its awarding

bodies and contributes effectively to the approval process. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met both in design and operation, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.20 The University of Portsmouth's Examination and Assessment Regulations enable its oversight of all assessment processes, and the University's Collaborative Provision Policy defines the College's responsibilities. The University's course team determines the assessment strategy and develops all assignments. Double-marking and moderation with other colleges in the partnership is organised by the University team which ensures that the assessment of students is applied consistently regarding the achievement of learning outcomes. For the University of Greenwich provision, the Network Colleges Trainee Handbook explains the academic framework and professional standards informing assessment. The College is a member of a network of colleges, led by the Network Coordinator and a nominated Link Tutor from the University. The design, approval and monitoring of assessment strategies lie under the awarding body's academic and regulatory framework. The Memorandum of Agreement confirms the responsibilities of both parties. The original process of programme design is led by the awarding bodies and this ensures the assessment of learning outcomes in relation to the credit value of modules. The College has an Assessment for Learning Policy which has been adapted for higher education. This document outlines the general principles of assessment and procedures to be followed at various stages of the student life cycle. Programme specifications summarise the learning outcomes and approaches to assessment which in turn inform the content of programme and unit handbooks. These procedures allow the College to meet Expectation A3.2 in theory.

1.21 The review team tested the effectiveness of these policies and procedures in practice by examining awarding bodies' documentation, the Assessment for Learning Policy, minutes of programme management meetings, programme specifications, programme and unit handbooks, and external examiners' reports. The team met senior staff, teaching staff, representatives from the awarding bodies, and students from the two programmes.

1.22 The evidence reviewed showed the policies and procedures to be effective in practice. The review team saw evidence to confirm that academic staff at the College are able to contribute to discussions about assessment at meetings arranged by the awarding bodies. Academic staff at the College follow the processes for marking and moderation required by the awarding bodies. Moderation meetings for each unit on the foundation degree and the combined network conference and moderation events for the PGCE/CertEd enable teaching staff to engage with peers from other colleges and the university. Staff welcome the moderation days as providing valuable development opportunities in relation to their engagement with academic standards and understanding of the assessment regulations. Some foundation degree students had previously felt that the moderation process resulted in delays for them receiving feedback, but students whom the team met expressed a noticeable improvement after these concerns had been raised.

1.23 Assessment briefs are set by the Universities. The review team heard that staff at the College hold discussions with University Link Tutors regarding any proposed amendments to briefs for the following academic year. External examiners' reports confirm the validity of assessment practices and the appropriate assessment processes for the achievement of learning outcomes. The team heard confirmation from students that programme aims and learning outcomes are clearly stated in the programme and unit handbooks.

1.24 The review team heard that the Assessment for Learning Policy has been adapted for use in higher education. While the policy is generally fit for purpose, the appendix contains some statements relating to formative assessment which apply specifically to further education students. The College is encouraged to state specifically the arrangement for formative assessment as it relates to higher education students.

1.25 Overall, the evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for the award of credit and qualifications. The assessment methods and assignments provide appropriate opportunities for students to achieve the learning outcomes, and information is clearly set out in programme and unit handbooks. The effectiveness of procedures is confirmed by evidence from reports produced by external examiners. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met both in design and operation, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.26 For the foundation degree, the responsibility for overall monitoring and review, including periodic review, is outlined in the University of Portsmouth Programme Monitoring and Review Policy, including the Collaborative Operational Handbook. The Course Coordinator at the College and the University of Portsmouth Course Leader each submit an Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review (ASQER) to the University's Quality Assurance Committee and relevant Board of Studies. The evidence base for the College's ASQER report draws on external examiners' reports, analysis of student progression and achievement, and feedback from students. The Course Coordinator attends programme team meetings at the University and the latter conducts a periodic collaborative partnership review of the College every six years. The most recent review in 2014 confirmed that effective annual monitoring and review processes were in place.

1.27 For the teacher training qualifications, the Programme Leader produces the programme monitoring report for the awarding body's Progression and Award Board and School Quality Committee, while the University's Link Tutor visits the College annually prior to the production of the report. The reports are also discussed at the College during course team meetings. The oversight provided at programme level through these monitoring processes ensures that academic standards are met in accordance with the awarding bodies' requirements.

1.28 Following its IQER, the College introduced a higher education self-assessment report (HE SAR) which mirrors the approach used for the further education provision, including validation by the Quality Manager and the validation committee. This contributes to the overall College SAR and is the responsibility of the Adult Area Manager who produces the report following the end-of-course review process. The College states that the report is discussed at the HEMC. Feedback from awarding bodies is sent to the Principal, Quality Manager, and Adult Area Manager. These arrangements enable the College to meet Expectation A3.3 in theory.

1.29 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements for the monitoring and review of its higher education provision through scrutiny of SARs, partnership agreements and reviews, minutes of management and committee meetings, and annual programme reports. The team also met the Principal, students, teaching and support staff, and senior staff including representatives from the awarding bodies.

1.30 While the review team found that the College adheres to the annual monitoring cycles set out in the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies, the operation of the processes within the College to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review needs to be strengthened. Despite the HEMC being established following the IQER, to respond consistently to university partners and being the most senior higher education committee, the team found evidence that programme monitoring reports and ASQERs are not formally discussed and approved at the HEMC, nor are they formally validated internally. University Link Tutors provide feedback to course leaders and teams but

this is not reported to senior level meetings. In addition, no minutes are taken during meetings of the validation committee.

1.31 Examination of the College SARs, which use the Ofsted headings, showed limited levels of evaluative commentary and a focus mainly on the Access to HE Diplomas. The review team heard that the Quality Manager and Adult Area Manager meet to discuss the higher education programme SARs but these meetings are not formally recorded. Any 'issues' would be reflected in the final reports. The HEMC briefly discusses the higher education SAR but the only tangible development arising from those discussions are four brief action points which focus more on the Access provision, are reactive to issues, have no deadlines for completion, and do not evaluate higher education practice. The membership of the HEMC is made up of three managers but does not include the Course Coordinators or students. The recent College restructuring exercise has brought the Assistant Principal for Students and Community into the HEMC membership which will provide a cross-membership link to senior management team meetings. In addition, SMT membership on HEMC was provided by the Director of Business and Adult Provision between 2011 and February 2015, and since then by the Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning.

1.32 The review team heard that an action plan was produced at programme level following the latest University of Portsmouth periodic review and this had been discussed at course team meetings and briefly at the HEMC. The team also heard that the action plan had been discussed by the senior management team but there are no minutes taken at these meetings. The team found no evidence of effective institutional monitoring of the action plan through formal meetings and therefore the College has not demonstrated ownership of the review process. Therefore, the team recommends that, by January 2016, the College strengthen the operation of higher education quality processes to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review (see also Expectations B7 and B8).

1.33 While the College adheres to the annual monitoring cycles set out in the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies, the review team found that the operation of the processes within the College to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review needs to be strengthened. A recommendation has been made accordingly. The team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is not met in practice, and the associated level of risk is moderate. The level of risk is moderate because there are weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's academic governance structure. In addition, while the monitoring and review procedures are broadly adequate, there are shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Not met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.34 The awarding bodies are responsible for the setting of academic standards. The College participates in each awarding body's processes for external engagement in the design, approval and review of programmes. The College states that it has no role in employing external experts in the delivery of programmes and that there is no formal relationship with students' employers. The University of Portsmouth has a Professional Liaison Committee to ensure currency and engagement with sector influences. The College fulfils its obligations in line with the limited delegated responsibilities. External examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies which ensures external participation in the maintenance of academic standards and consistency across all partners involved in the University of Portsmouth franchise or the University of Greenwich's Network. These arrangements enable the College to meet Expectation A3.4 in theory.

1.35 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation relating to programme approval, collaborative partnership review, external examiners' reports, and minutes of programme meetings. The team also spoke to senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.36 Overall, within the College's delegated responsibilities, the review team found these processes to work satisfactorily in practice. Academic staff participated effectively in the 2014 partnership review with the University of Portsmouth, a process which drew on sector changes and included external academic representation. Academic staff on the foundation degree participate in the moderation days arranged by the awarding body and this enables interaction with peers in partner colleges and the opportunity to meet the external examiner. For the teacher training provision, the University's Link Tutor visits the College and the external examiner has conducted joint teaching observations with staff. External examiners' reports confirm that standards are maintained and that assessments are vocationally relevant across both programmes.

1.37 All students are in employment in vocational or professional settings. Students undergoing teacher training are required to have a workplace mentor for which training is provided by the University of Greenwich. There is a significant amount of interaction between the College and mentors in these settings. External speakers from professional settings are also used to provide practitioner input.

1.38 There is no formal requirement for students to have mentors on the foundation degree programme. Despite a recommendation from the Periodic Collaborative Partnership Review panel for the College to develop more external-facing relationships, the review team heard that funding constraints had resulted in the College having no direct relationships with students' employers on this programme and therefore it is reliant on students as the 'gateway' to employers. This issue is further discussed under Expectations B3, B4 and B10.

1.39 Overall, the review team concludes that externality is restricted, in the main, to the awarding bodies, external examiners, and relationships with employers on the PGCE course. The College approach to externality is largely defined by the requirements of the partner institutions, and direct contact between the College and external participants is therefore limited in this regard. Therefore, the team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

1.40 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. All but one of the Expectations for this judgement area are met, the exception being A3.3 where the team recommends that the operation of the processes within the College to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review need to be strengthened. The level of risk for Expectation A3.3 is moderate because there are weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's academic governance structure. In addition, while the monitoring and review procedures are broadly adequate, there are shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

1.41 The review team therefore concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies at St Vincent College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval

Findings

2.1 The responsibility for programme design and approval lies with the awarding bodies in accordance with the University of Portsmouth's Curriculum Framework 2014 and the University of Greenwich Academic Council's quality assurance mechanisms. The College uses a generic pro forma for the initial approval of any new course which includes the outline business case, resourcing and marketing considerations. Programme development then progresses through discussion with the relevant awarding body and, ultimately, to academic approval through the awarding body's processes. The adherence of the College to the awarding bodies' formal procedures for programme design, development and approval allows the College to meet Expectation B1 in theory.

2.2 The review team established that these arrangements were working through the examination of course team meeting minutes and annual programme reports. The team also held meetings with students, teaching staff, and senior staff, including representatives from the awarding bodies.

2.3 Overall, the College's processes for programme design, development and approval work effectively (see also paragraphs 1.17-1.18). At programme level, the review team found that academic staff are familiar with the respective procedures of the awarding bodies. Staff also possess an understanding of relevant external reference points, including occupational and professional standards, and how these inform the programme specifications. The College states that staff are able to contribute at programme meetings held at the University of Portsmouth but describes the process as being 'fairly protracted'. The Course Coordinator for the foundation degree was closely involved in the initial design and subsequent review of the programme. Similarly, the Course Coordinator for the teacher training provision actively participated in the last review of the programme and effectively uses the Network Conferences to keep up to date with minor changes.

2.4 The review team heard that the College plans to expand its provision with the University of Portsmouth, with any new programmes being closely managed by the awarding body. In particular, the College has begun early stage discussions with the University to deliver a Bachelor's degree in Early Years Care and Education but this has yet to progress to a formal stage. The team was provided with the template used for approving its further education courses which focuses on business case proposals. While the team acknowledges that the academic case for new developments would use the documentation and follow the processes of the awarding body, the College is encouraged to consider further developing its own internal procedures for designing and approving a higher education programme prior to entering into those of the awarding body.

2.5 Overall, the review team concludes that the College is effective at discharging its responsibilities for the design, development and approval of its higher education programmes. However, should the College continue with its plans to increase its higher education provision, it should strongly consider developing its current internal procedure for

the academic discussion and approval of new higher education programmes. Given its current level of provision, the team concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission

Findings

2.6 The College adheres to the procedures specified by its awarding bodies with regard to the recruitment, selection and admission of students. According to the partnership agreements, the College is not required to have its own admissions policy. Instead, it relies on the policies of its University partners. However, reference is made to the admission of higher education students in its Assessment for Learning Policy. The admissions process differs between programmes. Students wishing to study on the foundation degree follow the University of Portsmouth's Admissions Code of Practice/Policy and are required to apply through the University's online system. Details of the programme criteria are set out in the Programme Specification which is available on the University and College websites. In addition, the University's Curriculum Framework also sets out admission requirements. The University passes applications to the College where staff carry out interviews and initial assessment of prospective candidates. For the University of Greenwich programme, the College follows the awarding body's Admission Policy for Collaborative Provision. While students apply directly to the University, the College is responsible for interviewing and selecting students. The intake targets for student numbers are set in conjunction with the University. All applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have the support of a qualified mentor in their workplace. The College website and prospectus contain information on admissions for both programmes, and the relevant University websites and prospectuses also provide this information. All admissions decisions are made by College staff before a list of successful applicants is sent through to the respective awarding bodies. The College follows the procedures laid out by the awarding bodies and this allows them to meet Expectation B2 in theory.

2.7 The review team examined the effectiveness of the recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures by analysing the documentation referred to in the previous paragraph. The team also held meetings with students, teaching staff and support staff.

2.8 Overall, the evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. Although the College does not have its own distinct admissions policy, there is evidence to show that staff and students clearly understand the admissions processes. Programme specifications provide prospective students with valuable information regarding entry requirements. In addition, students whom the team met stated that they had received clear information about the admissions process when they enquired about the programme and the communication from staff at the College was very effective.

2.9 While the awarding bodies review the admissions process through their processes for programme monitoring and review, the College does not currently carry out a formal internal review of process. This was confirmed in meetings with staff and through examination of minutes of the HEMC.

2.10 The review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. This is because staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities with regard to admissions and the procedures that the College has regarding admissions are in line with what is required by the awarding bodies.

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

2.11 The College's approach to teaching and learning in the context of higher education is described in the programme specifications produced by the awarding bodies, and is reinforced in course handbooks. As well as the oversight provided by the awarding bodies, the College uses its own quality cycle, which includes lesson observations, learning walks and peer observation, together with Observation of Teaching and Learning and Internal Quality Review, to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. These quality assurance processes are backed up by collecting students' views. End of course reviews are an integral part of the monitoring and development of teaching and learning, and they feed into course and higher education self-assessment reports. The College's processes allow it to meet Expectation B3 in theory.

2.12 The review team examined the effectiveness of teaching and learning procedures by reading relevant documentation including strategic documents, programme reviews and monitoring reports, programme specifications, and course handbooks. The team also held meetings with students, senior staff, teachers and support staff.

2.13 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. Evidence from student surveys and meetings with students suggest satisfaction and student engagement with the teaching and learning environment. Students on both programmes made it clear to the review team that they understand their responsibilities to engage in learning opportunities and course activities such as reflective learning journals, assignments and practitioner-based enquiry which support the development of employability skills. They also understand assessment and marking criteria and how to avoid plagiarism, with this information being made available in course handbooks and during induction. The College has procedures in place to ensure equality and parity of student access to assessment and learning opportunities. These are in accordance with the stipulations of the awarding bodies. Students whom the team met confirmed that they are given the opportunity to notify the College of any learning or physical needs when they are offered a place.

2.14 The learning environment reflects the diversity of programmes. As well as the teaching and learning resources and facilities offered by the College, students also have access to those of the awarding bodies, including the VLEs and a range of expert speakers. For its distance-learning students on the PGCE course, the College offers one-to-one tutorials and the opportunity to attend four optional Saturday workshops per year. In addition, they are required to have workplace mentors.

2.15 While there is no formal requirement for students on the foundation degree programme to have a workplace mentor, the review team heard that they are strongly encouraged to identify one by both the University and the College, particularly as most assignments rely on experience in the workplace. (see also paragraphs 1.38, 2.22, and 2.58) The College has little direct contact with these employers in the specific context of the workplace experience and they are not formally given any information from the College about the programme on which their employee has enrolled. Despite these issues, the team

heard from staff and students of the important part the programme plays in students' professional experience and development.

2.16 Continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities at the College are open to all members of staff. While the College does not provide any specific CPD training targeting higher education topics, teaching staff do have access to awarding bodies' staff development programmes. The College also supports staff to attend relevant training courses held at other institutions. While staff were keen to point out that building and strengthening its higher education provision is seen as a priority, there is currently no emphasis put on the pursuit of research activities or scholarly activity. Students whom the team met spoke highly of the quality and professional knowledge of their tutors.

2.17 With the University of Portsmouth provision, the College operates a lesson observation scheme and peer observation to ensure that the standard of teaching is set at appropriate levels. The scheme enables regular evaluation of quality and standards of teaching and learning by senior managers and curriculum specialists. Outcomes of lesson observations contribute to the College's appraisal system where staff are expected to review their strengths and areas for improvement in their practice. However, criteria for observation are generic to all College provision and no specific criteria have been identified for higher education. In addition, while there are examples of the lesson/peer observation schemes being reported as being useful in programme monitoring reports and at HEMC, the review team found no evidence of good practice and enhancement from these schemes being formally developed or discussed.

2.18 While the College might consider doing more to enhance the distinctiveness of higher education in its lesson/peer observation schemes and issues around workplace settings on the foundation degree programme, as discussed more fully in Expectations B4 and B10, the review team concludes that, overall, the College has effective procedures in place to deliver and monitor teaching and learning. Students were complimentary about the knowledge and quality of the teaching staff. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.19 Students have access to resources and support mechanisms provided by both the College and their awarding body. This includes the College and University VLEs, and the Learning Resource Centre (LRC). In terms of support, students primarily make use of the College tutorial system and the Cross-College Learning Support Coordinator. Information about the support available to students is clearly outlined through a number of sources including University Student Handbooks, the College Adult Education Handbook, unit guides, and also on the VLEs. Resources and support are monitored through the ASQER for the foundation degree programme and the annual programme monitoring report for the teacher training provision. The processes the College has in place, and the oversight provided by the awarding bodies, allow it to meet Expectation B4 in theory.

2.20 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements and resources by scrutinising relevant documents relating to minutes of committees, programme monitoring reports, partnership agreements, and course and student handbooks. The team also held meetings with students, senior staff, and teaching and support staff.

2.21 The team found that, overall, students are satisfied with the resources and support available to them. The expectations for both programmes are clearly articulated in the College's promotional material and, as confirmed by students, discussed at interview. Consequently, students are fully aware of the support available to them. A designated room has been allocated for higher education students on the days when they are in and the College has organised Saturday workshops for students on the teacher training provision. Students whom the team met were complimentary about the level and quality of support provided by the College and, in particular, commented on how helpful they find tutorials and the Saturday workshops. The high standard of tutor support has been highlighted as a strength by the University of Greenwich Link Tutor.

2.22 For students involved in the teacher training provision, there is a requirement when enrolling on the course to have a nominated mentor in their workplace. For the foundation degree programme, students are strongly encouraged to find a mentor in their workplace but it is not a formal requirement (see also paragraphs 1.38, 2.15 and 2.58). Therefore, some students have mentors while others do not. The review team heard that while students can raise workplace issues with College staff, some of them have felt disadvantaged by not having a mentor, particularly when it comes to writing assignments, most of which depend largely on experiences in the workplace. The team therefore recommends that, by January 2016, the College ensures the adequacy and consistency of support for students in workplace settings on the foundation degree programme (see also Expectation B10).

2.23 Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation B4 is met in this area as student support and resources are managed effectively within the requirements of the awarding bodies. In addition, students appreciate the support they receive from staff on their courses. The team does, however, recommend that the College ensure the adequacy and consistency of the student experience in Early Years workplace settings to ensure that levels of achievement are not adversely affected. Despite this recommendation, the team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.24 The College states that its higher education students have good opportunities to engage in quality assurance activities and to enhance their educational experience. These opportunities include: the nomination of student representatives for each year of the foundation degree programme; access to the University of Portsmouth Staff-Student Consultative Committee; module evaluations; written feedback; meetings with external examiners and Link Tutors from the awarding bodies; and indirectly via the Course Coordinator and Adult Area Manager to the HEMC and through the ASQER. The College states that students can attend foundation degree course team meetings and the HEMC if they choose. The terms of reference, however, do not include student membership. At the time of the review, there were no student representatives on any College committees. The 'Meaningful Student Involvement' paper, which is the College's model for consulting with students on both further and higher education courses, refers to students as partners in their education and aspires to engage students in meaningful dialogue, driven by course conferences. Student evaluation is tracked through course reviews, self-assessment reports, learning walks and lesson observations and student conferences. Although these approaches gather students' views, they are not sufficient to meet the Expectation with respect to the involvement of students as partners in quality assurance processes. Therefore, Expectation B5 is not met in theory.

2.25 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures in place to engage students by examining documentation, including the 'Meaningful Student Involvement' paper, programme monitoring reports, self-assessment reports, minutes of relevant meetings and committees, records of course conferences, and course feedback. The team also held meetings with the Principal, senior staff, teaching staff, and students.

2.26 There are opportunities for informal engagement between teaching staff and students and several formal ways of gathering student feedback to meet the requirements of the College and its awarding bodies. These include module evaluations, written feedback, end-of-year surveys, meetings with Link Tutors, learning walks and lesson observations. Students feel that results from module feedback are shared with them through direct contact and via the VLE, and that staff respond effectively to any 'concerns' they raise. The review team heard examples of where student feedback had resulted in changes, these tending to be of a resourcing nature or the resolving of issues. The team saw evidence that feedback from students is discussed with the Adult Area Manager and at course team meetings.

2.27 The course conferences were introduced for higher education students in 2013-14 and take place in year groups rather than for the programme as a whole because third year students attend College on a different day. The events allow students to make their views known to the Quality Manager and Adult Area Manager. The review team saw evidence that the recommendations following the University of Portsmouth's periodic review had been discussed with students at the course conference. The outcomes from the course conferences are fed back to the relevant Course Coordinator.

2.28 Course conferences are chaired by a manager with no teaching staff in attendance. This arrangement is designed to allow students to speak freely. However, despite the stated intent to engage students, the College has not taken the opportunity to consider the creation of a focused approach where teaching staff and students review programmes, their

experiences and engage in enhancement-led discussions. The review team considered that the prevailing focus of the mechanisms to promote student engagement are 'issue-based' and the majority of actions are of a corrective nature. For example, the College states that student views captured from learning walks and observations would be referred to managers 'where necessary'. The team considers that effective management in terms of analysis and use of survey data takes place at course team level and sporadically at HEMC, but the higher education student experience is not adequately considered as part of the overall College self-assessment report.

2.29 The College does not provide formal training for student representatives although the review team heard that the University of Portsmouth Student Union representative had undertaken this. Students whom the team met also confirmed that the University's Student Union had provided useful information about the role. The PGCE students whom the team met were not aware of any student representation system for their course. The team heard that the part-time nature of the programmes and the fact that students are all in employment result in them not attending relevant meetings, either at the College or the University. Instead, students regard the Course Coordinator as being the conduit of the student voice. The College states that student representatives 'can attend course team meetings and the HEMC if they wish or if they have any issues to raise', but the team saw no evidence of routine attendance by students at these meetings, nor of them being part of the formal membership of the HEMC or any other relevant programme or institutional committees. The team heard evidence that the Principal and the College Governors have been considering how to develop student engagement through involvement in the appointment of staff and through membership of committees but, at the time of the review, no decisions or action had been agreed. The team therefore **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College develop the student representation system to ensure effective student involvement in the College's quality assurance and enhancement processes (see also Enhancement).

2.30 The review team concludes that the College has numerous mechanisms to gather student views and values the student contribution. Students feel that the College is responsive to their suggestions and feedback. However, while recognising the part-time nature of student attendance, there are weaknesses in the formal student representative system. While the College aspires to engage students as active partners in quality assurance and enhancement, the current system of student involvement is more about providing feedback than active engagement. The lack of representation on key committees prevents deliberation of this feedback by the student voice. There is no systematic review of the effectiveness of student involvement mechanisms within the reporting structures. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is not met in design or operation, and the associated level of risk is moderate. Risk is considered moderate because the lack of a formal student representation system means there are weaknesses in the operation of part of the provider's governance structures.

Expectation: Not met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.31 The principles of assessment are articulated in the College's Assessment for Learning Policy, the introduction to which confirms that the awarding bodies hold responsibility for the design of assessments. The amount and timing of assessment is set out in the course handbooks and is managed by the awarding bodies. Assignment briefs are set by the Universities' subject teams but teaching staff are able to participate in the review of assessment at end of year meetings arranged by the awarding bodies. First marking and moderation takes place at the College, using the criteria set by the awarding bodies, followed by moderation days for all college partners held at the University of Portsmouth and by University of Greenwich network cluster meetings. The Course Coordinators are involved in the systematic annual review of assessment at programme level through their attendance at these meetings and through the production of their annual monitoring reports. The College's own policies and procedures for assessment and its approach to complying with its awarding bodies' regulations allow it to meet Expectation B6 in theory.

2.32 The review team examined the effectiveness of these policies and procedures by scrutinising assessment documentation including the Assessment for Learning Policy, course handbooks, minutes of programme meetings, annual monitoring reports, and external examiners' reports. The team also met senior staff, teaching staff, and students.

2.33 The evidence reviewed showed the policies and procedures to be effective in practice. Students whom the team met confirmed that assessment expectations, including academic conduct, are explained to them during induction and are clearly outlined in course handbooks and University student handbooks. Foundation degree students had stated in the student submission that further clarification of criteria to meet learning outcomes would be helpful. Students whom the team met, however, confirmed that marking criteria sheets are provided which they use in the production of their assignments and which staff mark and provide feedback against.

2.34 Students see assignments as vocationally relevant to allow them to progress at their workplace. For example, PGCE students value the reflective approach in the Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) module which enables them to record their experiences of assessment to inform their professional development. External examiners have also commented positively on the varied approaches to assessment. Despite the close link between assessment and experience in workplace settings for the foundation degree students, the review team established that the College has little direct communication with employers and that some students felt disadvantaged in their assignments by not having a mentor in the workplace (see also paragraphs 2.22 and 2.57).

2.35 The Course Coordinators assume responsibility for ensuring that assessment practices adhere to the requirements of awarding bodies. There have been ongoing issues with the lack of attendance of sessional staff teaching on the PGCE programme at University moderation days; however the Course coordinator attends on behalf of the course team. Students on the foundation degree programme regarded the external moderation process as delaying feedback to them, but this has improved as a result of students expressing their

concerns. External examiners' reports confirm that internal verification procedures are robust and cross-moderation processes work effectively.

2.36 Feedback on assessed work is welcomed by students in promoting their learning and outlining areas for improvement. The feedback is timely, constructive and clearly related to assessment criteria. Feedback via email is used effectively for distance learning students. External examiners' reports comment positively on the effectiveness of formative and summative assessment processes. The Assessment for Learning policy reinforces the College's commitment to formative feedback. Some of the references relating to drafts are applicable to further education students and the College is encouraged to ensure the approach is clear for those studying higher education programmes.

2.37 The PGCE Course Coordinator liaises with the University of Greenwich under the Recognition and Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and the review team heard of an example where this had been followed. The team heard from one foundation degree student that the Course Coordinator had conducted a similar assessment in liaison with the University of Portsmouth.

2.38 Overall, the review team concludes that the College provides appropriate opportunities for students to demonstrate that they meet the learning outcomes for their awards. The team therefore considers the Expectation to be met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.39 The awarding bodies are responsible for the appointment, management and briefing of external examiners. The Course Coordinators work closely with University Programme Leaders to ensure that appropriate processes are followed. The external examiners attend annual meetings with College course teams which are held at the University, and this provides the opportunity for staff to meet the external examiner. External examiners produce annual reports using the relevant university template which covers provision at all partner colleges. Reports are sent to the Course Coordinator by the University partners. The College states that the reports are sent to the Principal, Quality Manager, and Adult Area Manager, and any issues arising would be discussed at Senior Management Team (SMT) or HEMC and formal responses sent as required. Discussions about the reports also take place between course teams and the Quality Manager. These approaches provide the framework to enable the College to meet Expectation B7 in theory.

2.40 The review team examined the effectiveness of these procedures by scrutinising external examiners' reports, partnership agreements, programme monitoring reports, self-assessment reports, and minutes of the HEMC. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, and students.

2.41 The PGCE Course Coordinator shares external examiner's feedback with students and the students meet with the external examiner during the biannual visits. The University of Portsmouth Programme Leader visits the College, meets the students and shares feedback from the external examiner. In addition, findings from the reports are briefly summarised during the course conferences and are available on the VLE. Students whom the review team met confirmed that they know where to find reports and understand the role of the external examiner. The reports consistently confirm the achievement of learning outcomes and the appropriateness of assessment methods.

2.42 While there is evidence that external examiners' reports are discussed at partnership meetings attended by Course Coordinators, the review team found no evidence of a formal or systematic institutional-level analysis of external examiners' reports within the review cycle. Course Coordinators are required to comment on external examiners' feedback in the annual reports produced for the awarding bodies. Notes of course team meetings show discussion among the small teaching teams. The team heard that the Quality Manager discusses the reports with Course Coordinators but they are not considered, or responded to, in a more formal way. There is no specific reference in the self-assessment reports nor evidence of how external examiners' feedback is used to promote quality assurance and enhancement at the College. Therefore, the team recommends that, by January 2016, the College strengthen the operation of higher education quality processes to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review (see also Expectations A3.3 and B8).

2.43 Although there is evidence of analysing external examiners' reports at programme level, the review team has recommended that the quality assurance processes at institutional level need to be strengthened to ensure effective oversight through the monitoring and review cycle. The team concludes that the Expectation is met but the associated level of risk is moderate. The level of risk is moderate because there are weaknesses in the operation of part of the provider's academic governance structure. In

addition, while the monitoring and review procedures are broadly adequate, there are shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.44 The College follows the awarding bodies' processes for programme monitoring and review and also has its own internal processes (see paragraphs 1.26 to 1.28). These arrangements enable the College to meet Expectation B8 in theory.

2.45 The effectiveness of the College's practices was tested by examining relevant documentation, including Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Reports, self-assessment reports, partnership agreements, programme monitoring reports, minutes of HEMC and course team meetings, external examiners' reports, and reports from partner organisations. The team also held discussions with support staff, teaching staff, senior staff, awarding body representatives, and students.

2.46 While the review team found that the College adheres to the annual monitoring cycles set out in the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies and produces comprehensive annual monitoring reports for the University partners, the operation of the processes within the College to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review need to be strengthened (see paragraphs 1.30 to 1.32). In particular, the team found little evidence that annual monitoring reports are formally presented to HEMC, and feedback from awarding bodies is not formally reported to senior level meetings. In addition, no minutes are taken during meetings of the validation committee and there is limited evaluative commentary and developmental actions in SARs. Therefore, the team **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College strengthen the operation of higher education quality processes to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review (see also Expectations A3.3 and B7).

2.47 While the College adheres to the annual monitoring cycles set out in the partnership agreements with its awarding bodies and produces comprehensive annual monitoring reports for the University partners, the review team found that the operation of the processes within the College to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review need to be strengthened. A recommendation has been made accordingly. The team therefore concludes that Expectation B8 is not met in operation, and the associated level of risk is moderate. The level of risk is moderate because there are weaknesses in the operation of part of the provider's academic governance structure. In addition, while the monitoring and review procedures are broadly adequate, there are shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Not 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

2.48 The College has a Complaints Policy which covers both further and higher education provision. The policy is available for students on the VLE. The policy was updated and approved in 2014 to reflect a change in the University of Portsmouth's Student Complaint Procedure and also to supplement it with procedures specifically for higher education students. The College produces an annual complaints report for its Governing Body but reported that it has not received any formal complaints from higher education students. The awarding bodies' policies and procedures for complaints and academic appeals are provided to students in the University of Greenwich Network Trainee Handbook and University of Portsmouth student handbook. These approaches enable the College to meet Expectation B9 in theory.

2.49 The review team tested the effectiveness of these approaches in practice by examining the Complaints Policy, the policies and procedures of the awarding bodies, minutes of course team meetings, and student handbooks. The team also held meetings with students, senior staff, and teaching and support staff.

2.50 The evidence reviewed showed the policies and procedures to be effective in practice. The Complaints Policy provides a clear overview of the formal and informal procedural stages and guides higher education students towards the relevant awarding body should escalation be required. Students whom the team met confirmed that they are informed about the complaints and appeals processes during induction, and their awareness is reinforced at course conferences. The Adult Learner Handbook briefly refers to the Complaints Policy and guides students to the more detailed procedure. In reality, students are more likely to pursue issues with their tutors or through the learner voice feedback mechanisms as they perceive the College to be responsive to their needs.

2.51 The policies and procedures in place provide clear guidance to students with regard to complaints and appeals. Therefore, the review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.52 Students' experiences in workplace settings form an essential part of both higher education programmes. Students must be in paid or voluntary employment in order to meet the requirements of the courses and achieve the learning outcomes. The University of Greenwich's expectations of the College are set out in the Memorandum of Agreement and students are provided with the University's Network Trainee Handbook. Teacher training students are obliged to find a workplace mentor before enrolling on the course. The University of Greenwich provides Mentor Handbooks and online training for mentors.

2.53 For the foundation degree, the University of Portsmouth's expectations are set out in the partnership agreement it has with the College and the Collaborative Provision Policy. While students are 'strongly encouraged' to have a workplace mentor, there is no formal requirement for them to have mentors on this programme. The College is not required by the University to visit a student's place of work and therefore has no formal process for confirming or reviewing the suitability of workplaces.

2.54 The review team tested the College's arrangements for implementing and managing work-based learning opportunities through the scrutiny of partnership agreements, information for mentors, external examiners' reports, course and student handbooks, and by talking to students, senior staff, teaching staff, and a PGCE workplace mentor. The team was unable to speak to any workplace mentors on the foundation degree other than students who acted as mentors to other students.

2.55 Mentors on the teacher training provision receive good support from the University in terms of guidance and training. In addition, mentors carry out at least one joint lesson observation with College tutors each year and this has enabled dialogue to take place between students, employers and tutors.

2.56 While students are generally positive about their experiences on the foundation degree programme and the opportunities to link classroom theory to experience in the workplace, the relationship between the College and employers on this programme is less formalised. The College previously held evening meetings throughout the year, to which employers were invited. Due to funding constraints, these meetings no longer take place. Therefore, the College no longer has any formal means of communicating with these employers and relies on informal feedback from students.

2.57 Staff whom the review team met confirmed that the College has no formal process for confirming or reviewing the suitability of students' workplace settings, and instead relies largely on strong but historical relationships with local employers in this sector. While there is an expectation that the setting will be approved by Ofsted, this is not formally checked. Meetings with staff also confirmed that College attendance by students relies largely on the goodwill of employers, particularly in light of recent cuts to local funding that have affected remuneration to employers to cover study leave. While the team accepts that the College complies with the requirements of its awarding body, the lack of formal procedures and oversight by the College leaves students vulnerable, particularly given the requirement to be in employment to successfully complete the course. Therefore, the team **recommends** that,

by September 2015, the College formalise arrangements with students' employers to ensure the suitability of workplace settings on the foundation degree programme.

2.58 As noted above, while students on the foundation degree programme are strongly encouraged by both the College and awarding body to find a mentor in their workplace, it is not a formal requirement (see also paragraphs 1.38, 2.15 and 2.22). Therefore, some students have mentors while others do not. Some of those who do have mentors are being mentored by students from the second or third year of the course. Mentors receive no training or formal support and guidance from the College. The review team heard that while students can raise workplace issues with College staff, some of them have felt disadvantaged by not having a mentor, particularly when it comes to writing assignments, most of which depend largely on experiences in the workplace. The team therefore **recommends** that, by January 2016, the College ensure the adequacy and consistency of support for students in workplace settings on the foundation degree programme (see also Expectation B4).

2.59 While the College meets the basic requirements of the awarding body for the foundation degree programme, the lack of formal agreements, oversight and review of provision, absence of any direct communication with employers in the specific context of the workplace experience, and the lack of formal checks regarding suitability of all workplace settings, led to two recommendations. The team therefore concludes that Expectation B10 is not met in theory or in practice, and the associated level of risk is moderate. The level of risk is moderate because there are weaknesses in the operation of part of the provider's academic governance structure.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.60 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.61 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. Seven of the 10 applicable Expectations are met. The risk to the quality of learning opportunities within these six met Expectations is low, with the exception of Expectation B7 where there is a moderate risk regarding the monitoring of external examiners' feedback to promote quality assurance and enhancement at the College.

2.62 Expectations B5, B8 and B10 are not met, with a moderate level of risk. The review team makes three new recommendations in quality of student learning opportunities which relate to the following: developing the student representation system to ensure effective student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement processes (B5); formalising arrangements with students' employers to ensure the suitability of workplace settings on the foundation degree programme (B10); and ensuring the adequacy and consistency of support for students in workplace settings on the foundation degree programme (B4 and B10). The team repeats the recommendation from Part A about strengthening the operation of higher education quality processes to ensure effective institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review (B7 and B8).

2.63 The moderate risks in Part B indicate some weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's governance structure and shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which quality assurance procedures have been applied. The College's priorities and recent actions also suggest that it may not be fully aware of the significance of certain issues. The review team therefore concludes that, overall, the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet** 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 for prospective students is available via the website and a document about adult courses. The College has a limited amount of information about higher education courses on its website and, within these pages, there are links to the relevant pages on the awarding bodies' websites. The main College prospectus does not feature any information about higher education. All course handbooks are compiled by the respective awarding bodies. The College website is the main source of information for the College's external audience, including prospective students. Current students have access to both the College VLE and the VLE of their awarding body, and they contain course information, learning materials, assessments, student support and each University's respective regulations.

3.2 The College supplements the handbooks provided by the Universities with its own Learner Handbook, detailing the services and resources available at the College for foundation degree students. Each University is responsible for the production of student handbooks and programme specifications. The College is required to adhere to the University of Portsmouth's Collaborative Programme Materials Policy and to submit all draft promotional materials to the University for approval prior to publication. Information specific to the College is signed off by the Adult Education Manager and the Principal. These practices and procedures allow the College to meet Expectation C in theory.

3.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing the website, VLE, programme specifications, course and student handbooks, partnership agreements, and promotional material. The team also met students, teaching staff and support staff.

3.4 The review team found the policies and procedures for checking and producing information about higher education provision to be effective in practice. The College takes little ownership of documentation relating to its higher education but the team is satisfied that it adheres to the requirements of its awarding bodies. Students whom the team met were all satisfied with the information they had received prior to and during their course, including handbooks, programme specifications, course materials and on the VLEs.

3.5 The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for providing and maintaining information about its higher education provision that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Students are positive about the information provided by the College and know where to find what they want. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.6 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. The team makes no recommendations in this section. The review team therefore concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College does not have a distinct strategy for the enhancement of its higher education provision. The College states that the student experience is managed by small course teams 'being highly responsive to individualised needs' of its part-time students, for example in the provision of flexible tutorials, and Saturday workshops for students on teacher training. In 2012, as part of a restructuring exercise, the higher education provision became part of the Business and Adult Education Department to provide 'a more cohesive offer'. The HEMC was established with a remit to monitor and assure the quality of higher education provision, produce a higher education SAR to inform the College SAR, and to report to the senior management team. Other than the higher education SAR and action plan, there are no defined or strategic processes for the improvement of higher education learning opportunities at provider level. In response to a request before the visit to confirm the strategic approach towards enhancement, the College acknowledged that its higher education strategic developments had not been 'sufficiently formalised'. While the College stated that its overall strategy was in the process of being updated, the strategic priorities provided to the review team made no specific reference to strategic developments in higher education. Therefore, the Expectation about Enhancement is not met in theory.

4.2 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the procedures by examining Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review (ASQER) reports, programme monitoring reports, student feedback, the higher education SAR and action plan, course conferences notes, the University of Portsmouth Periodic Collaborative Review, and minutes of the HEMC. The team also held meetings with the Principal, senior staff, teaching staff, and students.

4.3 While the review team saw evidence of the College responding to students' concerns and subsequent improvements being made at programme level, it saw insufficient evidence of deliberate steps being taken at a provider level to promote the enhancement of students' learning opportunities. In particular, the team found no evidence of any integration of enhancement initiatives in a systematic and planned way, and no tangible examples of dissemination of good practice across the higher education provision. The team saw little evidence in the minutes of HEMC meetings regarding discussion and recording of enhancement-led discussions. During 2012 and 2014 the College went through periodic reviews with both awarding bodies but the team found no evidence of any developmental plans arising from the recommendations which might have formed the basis of a systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. As noted in paragraphs 1.31-1.32 and 2.46, the higher education SAR does not evaluate practice for dissemination and further development and is only briefly discussed in the HEMC. This led to the recommendation for the College to strengthen institutional oversight of programme monitoring and review. The team heard that a strategic approach towards improving the quality of students' learning opportunities was 'now developing' but, at the time of the review, there was no evidence of this in practice. Therefore, the team **recommends** that, by July 2016, the College develops and implements a strategic and systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.4 The College has a student representation system but this is not fully developed or supported with training to enable student representatives to engage fully with quality

assurance and enhancement. This is explained more fully in paragraph 2.29, along with some of the reasons why students and their representatives have not been able to take up these opportunities. The review team recognises the difficulties faced in engaging part-time students and also accepts that the College does use other methods effectively to gain feedback from students. For example, the introduction of course conferences and discussion with students as part of lesson observations were cited as evidence of increasing student involvement. However, there are limited formal mechanisms, for students to participate in discussions and decisions in relation to the identification of enhancement themes or other actions arising from annual monitoring of standards and quality. Despite student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement being selected as the theme with its potential to make an impact on college systems and learner experience, this has not translated into a deliberate plan to progress that during 2014-15 and beyond. Therefore, the team recommends that, by January 2016, the College develop the student representation system to ensure effective student involvement in the College's quality assurance and enhancement processes (see also Expectation B5).

4.5 While the review team heard of examples of improvements for students being made at programme level, there are limited deliberate steps and effective oversight mechanisms at provider level to drive forward enhancement. The College's processes and structures do not enable it to systematically identify, implement and evaluate enhancement-led initiatives. The recommendation made in Expectations A3.3, B7 and B8 regarding the lack of strategic oversight reinforce the conclusion. The College does not formally discuss higher education through its committee structures and acknowledged that higher education strategic developments were not 'sufficiently formalised'. While recognising the difficulties in engaging part-time and distance-learning students, the team also felt there were weaknesses in the current student representation system. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the level of risk is moderate. The level of risk is moderate because there is insufficient emphasis or priority given to enhancing quality in the College's planning processes.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.6 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this area is not met and the level of risk is moderate. The College, while clearly committed to improving the quality of students' learning opportunities, was unable to provide sufficient evidence of deliberate steps being taken at a provider level. The team makes one new recommendation in this section, also repeating one from a previous section (see B5). The new recommendation concerns the development and implementation of a strategic and systematic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The repeated recommendation refers to the development of the student representation system to ensure effective student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement processes.

4.7 The recommendations made by the review team suggest a weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance structure, and an insufficient emphasis or priority given to enhancement of higher education in the College's planning processes and strategic approaches. Finally, the College's priorities suggest that it may not be fully aware of the significance of enhancement at higher education level, even taking into account the context of its franchised provision with the University partners and the small scale of higher education provision. The review team therefore concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Findings

5.1 The College selected the theme of student involvement as having the potential to make an impact on college systems and learner experience. The self-evaluation document noted that, given the small number of students, there are many informal opportunities to realise student involvement. Student representatives are nominated for the foundation degree to represent student views to teaching staff and managers; there is no training provided for the role. Students are invited to attend the programme management committee meetings and Staff-Student Consultative Committee meetings at the University but none of the current students have attended. The College has introduced formal course conferences for higher education as the vehicle for students to meet biannually with the Quality Manager and Adult Area Manager.

5.2 Students complete unit evaluations, college surveys and the PGCE students evaluate each Saturday workshop. Although the self-evaluation document states that such feedback is analysed at institutional level, the review team found little evidence of systematic analysis above the immediate course team level. Students do not attend course team meetings or the HEMC.

5.3 In summary, the review team concludes that student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement operates primarily on a reactive model basis. This ensures that issues are resolved as they arise but the College is encouraged to consider appropriate ways to facilitate the involvement of students as more proactive participants in their learning experience.

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 29-32 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#)

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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