Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

April 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. The review took place from 26 to 29 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Susan Blake
- Dr Jenny Gilbert
- Mr Ahmed Junaid
- Mr Scott A Thomas (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

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

---

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust:

- the systematic integration of academic study and clinical practice within the taught elements of the Trust's provision which enhances the students' learning experiences (Expectation B3)
- the provision of online access to library and study skills resources enables student development and achievement (Expectation B4)
- the centralised process for approval of assessment tasks and allocation of marking to ensure equivalence across all national centres (Expecation B6)
- the strategic intervention to enable, support and promote the use of technology-enhanced learning (TEL) across the provision, including the incorporation of library and TEL staff on core Trust committees which makes a significant contribution to the enhancement of student learning (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust.

By June 2017:

- ensure that feedback on all student work is consistent and timely and provides guidance on how to improve (Expectation B6)
- work with external examiners to ensure that there are explicit comments on student performance at individual national centres (Expectation B7)
- ensure that both staff and students are more actively and explicitly involved in annual monitoring processes (Expectation B8)
- improve the clarity of information about courses offered to prospective students to ensure its fitness for purpose (Expectation C).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the initiatives to engage postgraduate research students with the Trust's wider research community (Expectation B11).

Theme: Digital Literacy

The Trust wishes seeks to ensure that all staff and students are competent with Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and strives to include digital components in the curriculum. In order to realise this vision the Trust has appointed a Head of Technology Enhanced Learning who has then drafted the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy for 2014-17. The Trust has a set of 10 strategic objectives which seek to deliver a successful implementation Digital literacy is also detailed on the VLE with a course that students can take. It outlines the seven principles of Digital Literacy. Staff in the TEL have a good grasp of the strategy and how they can embed digital literacy across the Trust. Some programmes are rolling out assessments which contain a significant level of digital literacy. The overall finding is that the embedding of digital literacy is well and truly in motion but will require a few more years before the strategy is fully implemented with all staff and students comfortable with TEL. That withstanding, the Trust has taken clear steps at a strategic level to start the journey towards full digital literacy.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust satisfactorily completed the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

About The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) is a specialist mental health trust focused on psychological, social and developmental approaches to understanding and treating emotional distress, disturbance and mental ill health, and to promoting mental health. It was founded in 1920, became a part of the NHS in 1948, became an NHS Trust (bringing together the Tavistock Clinic and the Portman Clinic) in 1994, and achieved authorisation as an NHS Foundation Trust in 2006.

The Trust has 824 students studying on validated courses. A very large percentage of the students are enrolled on postgraduate courses validated by the University of East London (UEL) and The University of Essex. The great majority of Trust students are part-time; there are a small number of full-time students enrolled on the MA in Psychoanalytic Studies validated by UEL, and also both the Professional Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology and the Professional Doctorate in Child Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy validated by Essex and UEL respectively. However, all students enrolled on both of these doctorate programmes undertake placements in professional settings and so are not full-time in the conventional meaning of the term. The number of 'full-time' students enrolled on these three courses in academic year 2015-16 is 136. In 2015-16, 81 per cent of students are over the age of 30, and 82 per cent are female. Of those who declared their ethnicity (87 per cent), 65 per cent are White, eight per cent Black British/African/Caribbean,

four per cent Asian or Asian British Indian, three per cent Other Mixed Background and three per cent Other Ethnic background.

The Trust employs in the region of 100 clinician-teachers who comprise the teaching staff. In addition, there are some 200 or so visiting lecturers contracted to the Trust who teach across the portfolio of validated programmes.

QAA undertook a Review for Educational Oversight (REO) of the Trust in February 2012. The major changes since then include:

- the appointment of new Chief Executive
- the Trust's Strategic Plan 'Shaping the Future' (2014)
- the Higher Education Academy Associate's Portfolio Review Report (2013)
- the restructuring of the Directorate of Education and Training
- the establishment of supporting committees for the delivery, management and governance of education and training
- an organisational restructuring based on reorganising duties to be consistent with the new course portfolio.

The Trust has effectively addressed all the good practices and recommendations from the REO in 2012. The good practices included the management of academic standards, engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (now the Quality Code), the innovative library service and exemplary practices for public information. There were five recommendations concerning double marking and moderation, producing a summary report for external examiner reports, a learning and teaching strategy, responding to student feedback, and information for employers. These were addressed by monitoring visits in 2013 and 2014, with both reports being very positive about the Trust's response.

Explanation of the findings about The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The Trust offers awards on behalf of three awarding bodies; each approves, monitors and reviews one or more of the Trust's higher education courses. The awarding bodies are: the University of East London (UEL), The University of Essex and Middlesex University. Each university confirms the standards of the Trust's programmes through the application of their academic frameworks and regulations and ensures courses are mapped to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

1.2   There is a collaborative agreement between the Trust and each of the universities. The Trust designs its own courses, modules, learning outcomes and assessment to be approved during validation. The Trust has been working with UEL, its longest standing partner, to deliver a large number of professional doctorates and post-graduate taught programmes, alongside a small number of PhD registrations, and with The University of Essex to deliver a smaller number of postgraduate taught degrees and professional doctorates.

1.3   Following the recommendation from an external review undertaken in 2013 to consider the advantages of moving to one awarding body, the Trust has endeavoured to move its programmes to The University of Essex. This is taking place over 2015-16 and will

result in one postgraduate course remaining with UEL and one undergraduate BSc top-up course remaining with Middlesex University. The two courses that are not transferring to The University of Essex approval remain with the original awarding body because they are in different subject areas and need to retain disciplinary oversight.

1.4   Some of the Trust's courses are subject to the external requirements of a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB). The Trust works with six PSRBs. It has also been in receipt of a Health Education England national training contract since 1994.

1.5   In addition to delivery at the main location, the Trust oversees the delivery of courses at a number of national centres that are designated as either an associate or an alternative centre. In each case the awarding bodies recognise the centre and has in place either a bipartite or a tripartite agreement. Associate centres are those where due diligence of the centre has been undertaken and a tripartite collaborative agreement between the University, the Trust and the centre has been signed. A small number of course deliveries have been managed by the Trust as alternative centres of delivery, under a bipartite agreement, in partnership with the awarding body and held under the overarching Memorandum of Cooperation between the University and the Trust. The Northern School of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy is anomalous as it has three courses delivered under a tripartite agreement with UEL and one course delivered under a bipartite agreement with The University of Essex.

1.6   The oversight from the three awarding bodies would enable the Trust to meet the Expectation.

1.7   In order to test this Expectation the review team studied the Trust's self-evaluation document submitted for this review, the regulations of the three universities, collaborative agreements, the committee structure, the documentation relating to the transfer of courses to a new awarding body and held meetings with staff.

1.8   The Trust's Academic Governance and Quality Assurance Committee (AGQAC) is responsible for assuring standards and embedding quality in all of the Trust's courses, and formulating and reviewing policy on quality assurance matters. This committee, along with a number of recently created committees, reports to the Education and Training Executive Committee. At a time of revalidation and the transition of most courses to one awarding body, and in advance of the proposed development of four main regional centres as hubs for expansion in student numbers these changes are strengthening governance and ensuring effective decision making.

1.9   The transfer of courses to The University of Essex is a strategic move to strengthen the connection between the Trust and the University in order to gain a clearer and optimum synergy in relation to the respective expertise of each organisation to include staff development and linked research activity. This has been a planned, phased and well-coordinated transfer.

1.10   Most staff to whom the team spoke were conversant with external reference points including relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and professional standards, though staff from national centres were less familiar. AGQAC considered the revised *Doctorate Characteristics Statement* in 2015 to assure itself that the current professional doctorate courses remains in alignment.

1.11   The ultimate responsibility for setting and maintaining standards rests with the awarding body. At approval and review, subject benchmarks and professional body requirements are taken into account. External examiners for all three universities confirm that programmes align with the FHEQ. Therefore, the team concludes that Expectation A1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.12   The regulatory framework of each awarding body determines the academic standards for each course. The Trust works within the established academic frameworks and regulations of each awarding body with responsibilities as set out in the relevant collaborative agreements. The Trust follows exactly the frameworks and regulations of The University of Essex and Middlesex University.

1.13   However, UEL has approved a distinct UEL-Tavistock composite framework with regulations that accommodate both parties. Within this composite framework is a framework for level 7 courses and another for professional doctorates. The Trust has powers delegated from UEL that enable it to act as if it were a school of UEL. The powers devolved to the Trust include consideration of Review and Enhancement Process (REP) reports, programme modifications, nomination of external examiners and nomination of external advisers for academic approval and review, initial approval of new programme proposals and chairing of assessment boards. The Trust has also developed its own assessment regulations with UEL. The University of Essex is not currently intending to set up a separate framework following the transfer of courses from UEL.

1.14   Regulatory requirements are sufficiently robust and the Trust's processes are appropriately designed and would allow Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.15   The team tested this Expectation by consulting the regulations of the three awarding universities, the UEL-Tavistock composite framework and the partnership agreements, and by posing questions to senior staff and teaching staff.

1.16   The AGQAC is the key committee. Its membership includes representatives from the two main universities, The University of Essex and UEL, and student representatives, though the Trust finds it difficult to maintain continuity of student membership. AGQAC reports to the Education and Training Executive and through this to the Education and Training Programme Management Board. Changes to the committee structure have enhanced transparency. Other committees key to assuring standards include the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Student Experience Committee, the UEL-Tavistock School Research Degrees Subcommittee and the Trust Research Ethics Committee. There are clear reporting lines between committees and into the awarding bodies' committee structures.

1.17   The virtual learning environment (VLE) site for each module and course has clear links to the regulations of the relevant awarding bodies to ensure that students and staff are aware of the regulations that apply to their course. For example, academic offences and extenuating circumstances are dealt with under the relevant regulations of The University of Essex, UEL and Middlese*x* University. A briefing event on The University of Essex (Essex) regulations was held to prepare staff for the transition of their course to the regulations of a different awarding body. As a result staff and students are clear about the regulations that apply to each course.

1.18   The awarding body approval processes and the UEL-Tavistock composite framework ensure that credits are allocated appropriately and consistently against the national credit framework, both at the Trust and in associate and alternative centres. In order to manage the transfer of courses from UEL to Essex all courses were assigned to a group and each group of courses has been, or will be, validated during 2015-16. In September 2015, 11 courses were transferred to The University of Essex under interim validation, a lighter touch desk-based exercise that provided approved status for one year maximum. By September 2016, these courses, together with remaining courses transferring from UEL to Essex, will be subject to one standard validation that includes visits to the associate and alternative centres. Completing Professional Doctorate students will remain with UEL, this teach-out could take up to five years since UEL regulations permit such students to take eight years to complete the programme from initial enrolment.

1.19   The Trust operates within clearly defined academic frameworks relating to its three awarding bodies. It has an effective system of governance in place in order to secure academic standards. The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.20   Awarding bodies have the ultimate responsibility of maintaining the record of each programme and qualification. The awarding bodies publish the validation reports and other documents that constitute a formal record of each programme. The Trust is required to confirm the accuracy of such reports prior to it becoming an approved record. In the case of The University of Essex, the Trust is also required to produce a module map. This map contains details of learning outcomes. Once the programmes are approved each awarding body adds the new programme to the register.

1.21   The oversight from the three awarding bodies would enable the Trust to meet the Expectation.

1.22   The review team examined the Trust's records of programmes and discussed these with senior staff and academic and support staff.

1.23   The awarding bodies provide the Trust with guidance and set templates for programme specifications and in the case of Essex, the module maps. Trust staff develop programme and module specifications and are also responsible for their revisions. These are subject to internal scrutiny before presentation to validation panel with the partners.

1.24   The Trust publishes course handbooks for all courses, these also include definitive details of the course such as course structure, course aims, course level learning outcomes and module specifications. These are provided to the students at the beginning of the course through the VLE. Details of all programmes are also published through the website.

1.25   The Trust operates within clearly defined academic frameworks relating to its three awarding bodies. It has an effective system of maintaining records. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.26   The Trust works under the approval processes set by the awarding bodies with regards to its taught programmes and research degrees. The University of Essex has issued a clearly defined template for review of courses, which discusses all key areas to ensure UK academic standards are being maintained. The Trust uses the awarding bodies' academic framework and regulations to assure that standards are met. There are common elements within the approval processes for the three partners, for example, for The University of Essex (as previously with UEL) new course proposal and approval is a two-part process; part one includes a business case and outline approval, at this stage besides completing the outline approval form.

1.27   These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.28   The review team examined validation documents for all programmes for each of the awarding bodies and discussed these with senior staff and academic and support staff.

1.29   The Trust is responsible for providing all the relevant programmes specifications, course handbooks, module specifications details about how the placements will be managed, relevant policies, student feedback and resources available. It includes a formal approval by the awarding body. The assessments are set and approved as part of this process and are outlined in the programme specifications. The process involves external input. The awarding bodies ensure that the validation panel members consider the external reference points while validating programmes.

1.30   The Trust's AGQAC plays a vital role in monitoring academic standards. Staff who are members of AGQAC are familiar with the approval processes and they support faculty staff in applying for programme approval.

1.31   The teaching staff at the Trust is aware of awarding bodies' processes with regard to approval and validation of programmes and how to ensure that the programmes are set at the correct levels. Teaching staff participate in the development, approval and validation exercises.

1.32   The Trust operates within clearly defined academic frameworks relating to its three awarding bodies for the approval of programmes. The process is effective and thorough. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): 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

1.33　The awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for the award of a qualification on successful completion of a course, for approving courses, and for appointing external examiners. Allocation of responsibilities is set out in the relevant Collaborative Agreement and its Schedules. The Trust sees itself as having equal responsibility for engaging in mechanisms to maintain standards, and has produced annual reports on academic standards since 2012. Internally, AGQAC is responsible for promoting and embedding standards. There is validator representation on AGQAC and shared membership of other quality bodies, such as the Essex-Tavistock Curriculum and Quality Group. Standards in research degrees are the responsibility of the UEL Tavistock School Research Degrees Sub-committee (TSRDSC), or the Research Students' Progress Committee (RSPC) in the case of Essex.

1.34　Learning outcomes are set on course approval within the processes of each validating body, and assessment arrangements scrutinised. This includes approval of research programmes. Definitive Programme Specifications must be produced, and Essex validation also requires a module map to show that course learning outcomes are covered in units. Unit outlines must include information on credits, learning outcomes and assessment methods. Executive responsibility for the integrity of courses and aligning learning outcomes to academic levels rests with the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for the integrity of courses and aligning learning outcomes to academic levels. Programme and module learning outcomes and assessment criteria are made available to students in course handbooks.

1.35　Assessment is primarily conducted within the assessment regulations of the relevant validator. There is some degree of delegation, in that for example UEL has approved a distinctive level 7 framework for Trust programmes with its own regulations. The awarding bodies set requirements for the holding of assessment boards. For UEL courses the Trust holds field assessment boards which have identical terms of reference and agendas and are chaired by suitably trained staff, with awards ratified by the UEL School Award Board. Essex boards are chaired by the Essex Dean or Associate Dean of Academic Standards and Partnerships, and Middlesex boards are chaired by the Middlesex Link Tutor. The UEL Academic Review in 2012 included a review of the management and conduct of assessment boards.

1.36　External members are involved in course approval panels, and many courses have to meet professional body requirements. External examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies, and external examiner report templates ask for confirmation of standards and assessment processes.

1.37　The design would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.38   The review team tested the expectation by reading a range of relevant documents and meeting senior staff.

1.39   The team found that processes for the design and approval of courses and qualifications result in appropriate standards and learning outcomes being set. Course and unit specifications contain appropriate learning outcomes, and review and revalidation processes provide effective opportunities for alignment with UK threshold academic standards and validator standards to be checked. The specification and meeting of standards is confirmed by external examiners. Staff the review team met confirmed institutional understanding of and commitment to the maintenance of standards and the rigour of assessment processes.

1.40   Where Trust courses are delivered through national centres the same assessment processes apply and the same assessments are used, with papers being shared across centres for marking to ensure parity of standards. Equivalence is considered as assessment boards and is confirmed by external examiners.

1.41   The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low because the achievement of learning outcomes are demonstrated through assessment and UK threshold standards have been satisfied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.42 Once standards and outcomes have been formally approved, each awarding body has devolved requirements in relation to annual review. UEL has a Review and Enhancement Process (REP) which includes a written course return and a quality review meeting leading to a School REP Overview Report. The Essex ARC process is broadly similar, with written reflection on performance indicators and student feedback, with reports considered at the Essex Partnerships Education Committee and at the Essex-Tavistock Curriculum and Quality Group. Middlesex requires an annual monitoring report process. These review processes include consideration of course design and standards through consideration of external examiner reports and data on student achievement.

1.43 Internally, AGQAC is responsible for promoting and embedding quality and standards, and it receives annually REP/ARC/AMR reports, and a summary of external examiner reports with an action plan. The Associate Dean for Academic Governance and Quality Assurance, who chairs AGQAC is responsible for the review and evaluation of courses.

1.44 The awarding bodies have a process for the periodic review of approved courses. Processes include the review of programme and module specifications to ensure ongoing alignment with UK threshold academic standards and degree-awarding bodies' own standards and the review of assessment strategies. All review processes include external members. All the courses that are being moved from UEL to Essex validation have been through a revalidation process. The Trust is also subject to a range of professional body approvals and bidding processes that include approval of standards and externality.

1.45 As the national centres only deliver courses validated for delivery at the Trust, their courses are part of normal periodic review, but there is also separate review where tripartite agreements are in place.

1.46 The annual and periodic review processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.47 The team tested the Expectation by reading a range of documents related to annual and periodic review, and by meeting a range of staff.

1.48 The team found that the annual review process is embedded, with the consideration of progression data, external examiner reports and student achievement. Each national centre produces its own report as part of annual monitoring. The monitoring process produces action points, which are considered by AGQAC, and the Trust responds to any resulting recommendations from the validating body. The range of examples of annual monitoring reports seen by the team showed only a few minor points relating to standards, and positive comments about the quality of student work.

1.49   Where the validation of courses is moving to The University of Essex, the team heard from staff that the process will apply for annual monitoring, but with the retention of the internal portfolio meetings that the Trust has found to be a valuable part of REP.

1.50   The range of periodic review reports seen by the team also showed consideration of standards, with no substantial issues arising. Some 29 UEL master's and professional doctorate courses were reviewed in 2012, with courses validated by The University of Essex reviewed at five-yearly intervals, producing recommendations which were actioned.

1.51   The Expectation is met and the risk is low because effective annual and periodic monitoring processes are in place and they specifically address the maintenance of academic standards.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.52   The regulatory framework of each awarding body determines the academic standards for each course. The Trust works within the established academic frameworks and regulations of each awarding bodies with responsibilities as set out in the relevant collaborative agreement. The Trust follows exactly the frameworks and regulations of The University of Essex and Middlesex University.

1.53   However, UEL has approved a distinct UEL-Tavistock composite framework with regulations that accommodate both parties. Within this composite framework is a framework for level 7 courses and another for professional doctorates. The Trust has powers delegated from UEL that enable it to act as if it were a school of UEL. The powers devolved to the Trust include consideration of REP reports, programme modifications, nomination of external examiners and nomination of external advisers for academic approval and review, initial approval of new programme proposals and chairing of assessment boards. The Trust has also developed its own assessment regulations with UEL. The University of Essex is not currently intending to set up a separate framework following the transfer of courses from UEL.

1.54   Regulatory requirements are sufficiently robust and the Trust's processes are appropriately designed and would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.55   The team tested this expectation by consulting the regulations of the three awarding universities, the UEL-Tavistock composite framework and the partnership agreements and by posing questions to senior staff and teaching staff.

1.56   The Trust committee with oversight of academic governance arrangements is the AGQAC. Its membership includes representatives from the two main universities, The University of Essex and UEL, and student representatives though the Trust finds it difficult to maintain continuity of student membership. AGQAC reports to the Education and Training Executive and through this to the Education and Training Programme Management Board. Changes to the committee structure have enhanced transparency.

1.57   Other committees key to assuring standards include the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Student Experience Committee, the UEL-Tavistock School Research Degrees Subcommittee and the Trust Research Ethics Committee. There are clear reporting lines between committees and into the awarding bodies' committee structures.

1.58   The VLE site for each module and course has clear links to the regulations of the relevant awarding bodies to ensure that students and staff are aware of the regulations that apply to their course. For example academic offences and extenuating circumstances are dealt with under the relevant regulations of The University of Essex, UEL and Middlesex University. A briefing event on The University of Essex regulations was held to prepare staff

for the transition of their course to the regulations of a different awarding body. As a result, staff and students are clear about the regulations that apply to each course.

1.59   The awarding body approval processes and the UEL-Tavistock composite framework ensure that credits are allocated appropriately and consistently against the national credit framework, both at the Tavistock and in associate and alternative centres. In order to manage the transfer of courses from UEL to Essex all courses were assigned to a group and each group of courses has been, or will be, validated during 2015-16. In September 2015, 11 courses were transferred to The University of Essex under interim validation, a lighter touch desk-based exercise that provided approved status for one year maximum. By September 2016, these courses, together with remaining courses transferring from UEL to Essex, will be subject to one standard validation that includes visits to the associate and alternative centres. Completing PhD students will remain with UEL, this teach-out could take up to five years.

1.60   The Trust operates within clearly defined academic frameworks relating to its three awarding bodies. It has an effective system of governance in place in order to secure academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

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

1.62   The Trust effectively follows the requirements of the universities to maintain academic standards. These processes are supported by the Trust's own internal procedures and guidance.

1.63   All seven of the Expectations in this area are met and the level of associated risk is low. The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies at the Trust **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The Trust has a Course Approval and Implementation Team (CAIT) which reports to the Education and Training Executive and has responsibility together with Portfolio Managers in driving and overseeing the production of new short and long courses. This group meets weekly. This function is managed within the Commercial Education Development Unit (CEDU) which identifies gaps in training needs and requirements through engagement with employers, provider organisation and commissioners. It meets on a monthly basis.

2.2 In relation to new course designs the CAIT considers all the relevant details alongside a market reports. New course designs are subject to internal scrutiny before being put forward to awarding bodies for formal approval. This scrutiny includes reference the relevant professional bodies and the clinical discipline of the Trust, the portfolio manager, who ensures that the qualification is in line with the relevant external reference points such as the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and learning or academic development developer. The CAIT considers all the relevant details alongside a market report.

2.3 The arrangements for the design, development and approval of courses are sufficiently robust and the Trust's processes are appropriately designed and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team tested this Expectation by reading validation and approval reports by the awarding bodies and meetings with staff and students.

2.5 The Trust's courses are closely linked with the needs of employers. Employer engagement is sought at the programme design and development. Most of the courses require relevant professional body approval and engagement. The student involvement in design and development is variable and depends on the courses, students engagement is also sought through course committees of existing programmes.

2.6 A validation report is published after the validation event which entails relevant details such as the decision, details of modules within the programmes, assessment, placement, commendations, conditions and recommendations.

2.7 The University of Essex has published course variation guidance which deals with the modification of existing validated provision, this guidance also forms set of overarching principles with regard to modification to current programmes. For Middlesex University, the modification to programmes is governed by Middlesex programme validation, review and modification procedures. The Transitional Plan Teach Out with UEL is comprehensive and thorough.

2.8 The Trust operates within clearly defined academic frameworks relating to its three awarding bodies. It has an effective system of governance in place for the design,

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.9   The Trust's admissions policy was published in 2014, which was followed by the Student Admission Procedure from February 2016. The Trust ensures that both of these documents are aligned with the *Equality Act 2010*. The Trust's website includes clear details of entry criteria, and where appropriate, any professional standards that may be required. All students apply using the common application form which is appropriate for all programmes offered across the national centres. This application form is then submitted electronically. In most cases applicants are invited to interview before they are offered a place on the programme. While there is a standard interview template, it is designed to be flexible to allow for course specific questions. In cases where applicants fail to gain a place on their desired programme, the Trust writes to them with feedback and may suggest alternative courses which may be more appropriate to them.

2.10   The evidence seen by the review team would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.11   The review team examined the effectiveness of the recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures through analysis of documentation, including the Admissions Policy and admissions letters. It analysed the information made available to applicants and prospective students such as the Prospectus. It also held meetings with students, teaching and professional staff, including those responsible for admissions from both the Trust and associate centres.

2.12   The review team found that the policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission work effectively in practice. When meeting with admissions staff it was clear to the review team that they knew the procedures in place for every aspect of admissions and recruitment. The Standard Operating Procedure document provides clear guidance for staff. Furthermore, students were confident in their knowledge of how their application worked and found the suggestions of other programmes helpful. Some students did note a slight confusion in the codes assigned to programmes in terms of how they were related or in showing the progression to further study (see paragraph 3.5 under Expectation C). Above all, students and staff are clear about the processes for admission.

2.13   The Trust adheres to the principles of fair admissions and has appropriate systems in place to ensure a professional, timely and supportive. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and the processes that are in place. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.14   In the course of revising the committee structure the Trust has created a Learning and Teaching Committee that reports to the Education and Training Executive. It is chaired by the Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching, a recently created post. Its purpose is to implement and monitor the Teaching and Learning Strategy and its remit differentiates it from another new committee, the Student Experience Committee.

2.15   The Learning and Teaching Strategy aims to monitor, review and improve the student experience; support lecturers in their teaching practice, increase engagement of the Trust in the wider higher education community; and align pedagogy with the Trust's Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy. The immediate objectives of the strategy include reviewing students' induction; creating an online resources for study skills; creating an Academy of Teaching within the Trust; establishing a route for teaching staff to achieve fellowship of the Higher Education Academy; reintroducing peer observation; holding an annual Learning and Teaching Conference; engaging with national bodies; and circulating a learning and teaching bulletin. The annual conference and the Trust Academy of Teaching are planned but not yet implemented.

2.16   The necessary structures and policies are in place and the documentary evidence provided would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.17   The team explored this Expectation through discussions with staff and students, through examination of the VLE and examples of course handbooks. It also looked at student feedback on learning and teaching and external examiner reports.

2.18   The Trust's accredited provision is almost entirely postgraduate and comprises taught programmes and professional doctorates with a small number of students enrolled on PhD programmes. Many students return to register for further Trust programmes and the team spoke to a number of students who selected the Trust due to its reputation or on the recommendation of a work colleague who has studied at the Trust.

2.19   Sharing of good practice occurs within academic tutor forums and research tutor forums that meet two or three times a year. The sharing also takes place through the cluster meetings held as part of the REP and ARC annual monitoring processes. The transfer of courses from UEL to The University of Essex has resulted in some courses in shorter modules to enable earlier feedback to students.

2.20   Although most of the initiatives specified within the learning and teaching strategy are new, the Trust's courses display a well-embedded approach to learning that integrates clinical practice and theory, using observation within the workplace with an emphasis on multi and interdisciplinary teaching and research. This is enabled by the use of placements and the application of theory from courses to the students' workplace. Placement providers and clinical supervisors, as well as students, made numerous references to the effectiveness of this integrated approach. The systemic integration of academic study and clinical practice within the taught elements of the Trust's provision is **good practice**.

2.21   The Trust recently undertook a survey of how lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) friendly and inclusive students perceived their learning and teaching. Given its role as a major provider of mental health training in the country, the Trust deems this important. The survey identified room for improvement, for example, where module content did not cover LGBT issues. A 2015-16 action plan was developed and is reviewed at course committees. The plan includes working with Stonewall.

2.22   There is a leadership away day and a staff training committee, offering bursaries for training, for both the clinical and the training arms of the Trust. Staff in managerial and administrative positions in the Department of Education and Training have taken up opportunities within this scheme. During 2013-14 the Trust worked with UEL to enable 14 staff to gain HEA Fellowship recognition through the HEA Professional Skills Framework. The Trust recently held a consultancy day with the HEA to agree a proposed CPD route to Fellowship; teaching staff are being supported through workshops with hours allocated on workload to enable them to prepare for HEA fellowship.

2.23   Peer observation was relaunched in the current academic year and each tutor is scheduled to be observed once every two years. There is a standard template and clear procedures for completion and sharing of documentation. Staff at the Trust's premises, and in national centres, report that peer observation is occurring and is helpful. The frequency of observation is under review.

2.24   Staff appraisals lead to the generation of individual Personal Development Plans and a training needs plan for the Trust and national centres. CPD from The University of Essex is available to Trust staff and reciprocal arrangement are anticipated. The Trust is beginning to develop staff's teaching skills more systematically through a menu of CPD offerings. This will be expanded through the planned Academy of Teaching.

2.25   The team considers that the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices are appropriate to support student learning and achievement and that there are effective assurance and review processes in place to maintain the quality and standards of provision. Therefore the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement*

Findings

2.26   Responsibility for student development and achievement is shared by AGQAC and the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC). Responsibility for the identification of salient issues rests with the AGQAC who will be required to forward a report to the LTC highlighting themes that the Committee needs to address. The Committee receives student feedback surveys and other reports. The recently instigated LTC's remit includes the review and alignment of learning and teaching developments with the student experience survey. Another newly formed committee, the Student Experience Committee, reports to both of the above committees and provides a forum for the discussion of all aspects of the student experience. It also provides the student body with feedback on action taken by the Trust and monitors matters relating to equality and diversity. Its membership includes provision for eight student members.

2.27   The learning and teaching strategy incorporates the creation and improvement of appropriate learning environments and the enhancement of the student experience. It falls under the responsibility of the Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching. Additionally, the Trust has a Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Strategy for 2014 to 2017. Its objectives include a redesigned VLE platform, enhancement of support services, study skills guidance and further development of digital literacy for staff and students.

2.28   The strengthening of the committee structure to ensure that students' perceptions of teaching and support is heard, and responded to, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.29   The review team tested the Trust's approach to the Expectation by considering the self-evaluation document and scrutinising evidence provided, including the VLE the terms of reference and minutes of relevant committees, and by meeting senior staff, teaching and support staff, and students both at the Trust and in a number of national centres.

2.30   The new Student Experience Committee provides a forum for discussion of all aspects of the student experience. The Trust has responded to the student experience survey particularly in the area of improving classrooms and audio-visual equipment and informing the student body, through its website, of action taken to address concerns raised by students.

2.31   All students are allocated a personal tutor who provides a consultation and advice service for pastoral issues. Students praised tutors for acting as a sounding board in relation to theoretical assessments and discussion of observations undertaken by the student. Frequency of meeting varies between courses, and for some courses students are required to be in therapy. Clinical trainees are also allocated a clinical supervisor. Placement supervisors and clinical supervisors were clear and enthusiastic about their role and positive about the support provided by the Trust. Postgraduate research students are invited to an annual doctoral conference and they also participate in an annual review of student progress once their research registration is approved.

2.32   Induction is normally dealt with at both generic and course level and is being rebadged as welcome week. A working group has been set up to coordinate it and, in addition to registration and meeting portfolio managers, students are introduced to the course, library services and VLE support and the links with the relevant university are

explained. There are also value added events such as social activities. Students reported positively on their induction experience.

2.33   The Trust's VLE platform was upgraded, redesigned and tested with students before launch in September 2015. It now supports electronic management of assessment, both submission and marking and conforms with a new pedagogically-informed institutional template that mirrors the structure of the Library's portal and the Trust's website. Students can check their work for integrity, though not all were aware of this. They particularly welcomed links directly to suitable reading and recorded lectures.

2.34   The electronic library is extensively used. Students at the Tavistock and in national centres are allocated a personal librarian and they can have face to face sessions on referencing and information retrieval or use online support. The part-time nature and distributed location of the students places heavy demands on electronic support. A wide range of study skills, including research skills, is now embedded in courses on the VLE following liaison between the library and academic tutors. The provision of extensive online access to library and study skills resources that enables student development and achievement is **good practice**.

2.35   The Trust offers a confidential student consultation and advice service, advertised through a printed flyer and online. Most students are aware of the service, although students at national centres were less likely to be familiar with it. The Trust runs a trainee Race and Equity Group, welcomed by students and open to all. Provision for students with disabilities includes assessment for dyslexia and mobility support; students reported positively on the support provided and the ongoing consideration given to students with degenerative conditions.

2.36   The team finds that the Trust recognises the part-time nature and distributed location of its students and has in place robust and effective online systems to support them in their academic, personal and professional development. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.37   The Trust has a Student Charter which details and underpins the Trust's policy of engaging both staff and students as equal partners in their learning journey. The student body is predominantly mature and part-time students. There is no formal Students' Union, however, this has not detracted from a strong tradition of student engagement. Students are involved mostly at a programme level on course committees. From the academic year 2015-16 the Trust has set up the Student Experience Committee. This Committee is supported by the Student Engagement Policy and was created in consultation with staff and students. Students are further engaged through the Student Race and Equity Group. The Trust ensures that a student sits on the AGQAC committee. Membership of the Trust's LTC includes a student representative. Furthermore, students are involved in validation panels for programmes approved by The University of Essex and are involved on periodic review panels for their programmes. The Trust also has plans to develop and introduce student representative training, provided online and the intention is to have this developed from July 2016.

2.38   The evidence seen by the review team, including the self-evaluation document and other documents, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.39   The review team examined the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place to engage students by examining documentation provided by the Trust. This evidence was supplemented by meetings with students on both Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research programmes, course staff, and with the Lead Student Representatives. Other sources included, the Student Charter, minutes of the AGQAC and validation reports,

2.40   The review team found that the policies and procedures for engaging students as partners work effectively in practice. In the meetings held with staff it was clear to the review team that student input is valued and this is something that was further reflected in meetings with students. The nature of the student body at the Trust with students often on placement or other forms of clinical practice make attendance at committees by students somewhat difficult. However, it is clear that there are significant informal mechanisms to engage students as partners which are often undocumented. When meeting students it was apparent to the team that students feel they are both valued and listened to and are more than willing to provide feedback when asked for it. Many students that the review team were members of the Student Race and Equity Group, and the feedback given to the team by this group was very positive.

2.41   The Trust takes deliberate steps to engage all students from all national centres as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation B5 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.42   Assessment in relation to both taught and research provision is largely carried out under the rules of assessment of the relevant awarding body. A distinctive UEL-Tavistock Academic Framework has been developed for master's level courses. The validating bodies also support fair practice in assessment with policies on matters such as extenuating circumstances and academic misconduct. The Trust has supplemented this by developing some internal assessment policies in relation to matters such as marking, verification, confidentiality and suitability for training.

2.43   Internally, AGQAC is responsible for promoting and embedding quality and standards in assessment, with support from the Learning and Teaching Committee. As part of ensuring coherence there is awarding body representation on AGQAC and also shared membership of other quality bodies, such as the Essex-Tavistock Curriculum and Quality Group.

2.44   Taught courses have a uniform credit structure and assessment strategies are approved as part of course approval to ensure congruence with teaching and with learning outcomes. The nature of the courses offered by the Trust requires appropriate types of assessment, and clinical work may be assessed through a portfolio of observations and reflections, with significant amounts of work based on an individual student's casework. This means assessment methods for a unit may not vary from year to year, but where titles or tasks may vary there is a process for advance agreement in consultation with the external examiner. Larger courses have a designated assessment tutor. The same assessments are used for each course across all centres of delivery, and centres may be involved in setting questions.

2.45   From 2015-16 all assessment work has been submitted and marked online. Each piece of work is marked with reference to a detailed comment sheet with general and specific criteria. Plagiarism-detection software is available. Where a course is delivered in more than one centre, work is allocated for marking to staff at another centre to support equivalence of standards. The verification process involves first marker and verifier's comment being sent to the external. Assessment processes are supported by standard operating procedures. For the three delivery centres in Italy, relevant procedures and assessment papers are translated into Italian and papers are written in Italian. Papers are allocated to a different Italian centres for marking. The external examiner speaks Italian. The centralised process for approval of assessment tasks and allocation of marking to ensure equivalence across all national centres is **good practice**.

2.46   Course and unit learning outcomes and assessment criteria are included in programme handbooks. A Student Regulations webpage has been developed to provide information as regards all aspects of assessment processes and procedures online in a single location.

2.47   Assessment boards are held in accordance with validator requirements, as set out under Expectation A3.2 in this report, with accompanying guidance. Data on results for each centre of delivery are presented separately so achievement at each centre can be compared. Pre-board meetings are held, including staff from locations of delivery and external examiners. There is not a separate extenuating circumstances committee for UEL courses so any cases are dealt with by the board. Any issues in relation to assessment are picked up through the annual review of external examiner reports and the Action plan. The Trust has produced annual Reports on Academic Standards since 2012, noting points relevant to assessment practice.

2.48   There is provision for recognition of prior learning for UEL courses. Students applying for Essex programmes may also make an application, as may those at Middlesex. This may be relevant in particular as regards experiential prior learning, and normally a portfolio of evidence is required. Information is available on the website and at Open Evenings. APL decisions are taken by the validating university, and where relevant approved by the assessment board.

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

2.50   The team read a range of documents relating to assessment process and procedure, including the assessment and feedback and academic offences policy. The review team also discussed assessment with students and teaching staff.

2.51   The Trust has responded constructively to suggestions for developing assessment processes. Following the 2012 REO the Trust drew up and implemented a common marking and verification practice, and an overall action plan in relation to external examiner reports. The mapping of learning outcomes and a four week deadline for feedback are in place following UEL recommendations.

2.52   Staff show a clear understanding of assessment processes. The Trust provides workshops for markers, and new markers are paired with experienced markers, though there is no formal requirement for training in relation to assessment. The team heard that the system for electronic submission and marking is now embedded and is operating successfully. The team saw evidence of the detailed data made available to assessment boards, and heard that the system of half-day long pre-board meetings organised on some courses works well. External examiners are asked to comment on assessment design and whether the conduct of assessment is fair, and they comment positively on assessment methods and processes.

2.53   Generally student achievement is high, and students the team met expressed the view that course learning outcomes, module learning outcomes and assessment criteria are easily available and adequately clear, and assessment is appropriate and fair. However, a few students thought there was some lack of clarity in information about assessment, and that marking criteria were confusing or not easy to follow, suggesting that information provided be revisited so that learning outcomes and criteria are more clearly inter-related. There are some student concerns about the timing of assessment where submission dates are bunched at the end of a course, and there may be some stress in relation to assessment, where for example a student needs to find a child to observe. Students generally felt that feedback was prompt and useful, but a few suggested some variability in practice, noting that feedback is not always clear on how to improve, and formative feedback is not available for all courses. A small number of external examiner reports and course committee minutes also raise some comments on variability of feedback. While there is a useful pro forma for feedback, the team noted that processes for marking do not specifically include the need for the quality of feedback to be checked. The team therefore

recommends that the Trust take steps to ensure that feedback on all student work is always consistent and timely and provides guidance on how to improve.

2.54   The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low because the Trust operates equitable, valid and reliable processes for assessment, enabling each student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved intended learning outcomes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.55   The Trust delivers courses that are distinct from the programmes at the validating university. Therefore each awarding body appoints external examiners specifically to the Trust's courses. In some cases a course is also delivered at one or more of the Trust's national centres and in that case the external examiner is responsible for all delivery points. There is only one case where a separate external examiner is appointed; this is for the course that is also delivered in the three national centres in Italy, where an Italian speaking external examiner is required to moderate assessment that is set and completed in Italian.

2.56   External examiner reports are dealt with slightly differently by each awarding body. However, all three awarding bodies publish regulations outlining the appointment process and defining the role of an external examiner. This includes conformance with a person specification and a check that there is no conflict of interest.

2.57   Compliance with each university's procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58   The Expectation was tested by studying a range of documentation including external examiners' reports and the external examiner action plan, checking the VLE and discussing the role of external examiners with staff and students.

2.59   The AGQAC monitors the external examiner appointment process, communicates with external examiners to ensure receipt of annual reports, checks that reports have been responded to and informs course leads when an examiner is reaching the end of their tenure. The course lead is responsible for writing a response to the external examiner's report and the Trust's quality assurance officer checks any outstanding responses. A report indicating any recurring themes is presented at AGQAC and an action plan is created and monitored.

2.60   Induction processes vary depending on the awarding body, in some cases there is an induction at the University and others have online induction. Following the induction process of the degree-awarding body the Trust briefs its external examiners. If a number of examiners are appointed at the same time an induction event is organised at the Trust. In other cases examiners are briefed on a one-to-one basis by members of the course team.

2.61   External examiners are allocated to a course and all the modules within it. A list is maintained, including the date of the end of contract. The external examiner is responsible for all deliveries at the Trust and at national centres; the sole exception being the Italian national centres where a separate Italian speaking external examiner is appointed.

2.62   As discussed under Expectation B6, in the case of courses delivered at national centres students' assessments are allocated to markers to ensure that all student work is anonymous and that no marker is assigned to mark their own students' scripts. Once marked, a sample of work, selected to comply with the awarding body assessment regulations, is moderated or second marked. This sample is then passed to the external examiner. Both moderator and external examiner are unable to distinguish the performance of students by location of study. At the assessment boards individual student performance is listed, collated by location, so external examiners can comment if there is an obvious difference in performance between Trust students and students from an associate or alternative centre.

2.63   Later in the annual monitoring cycle the results are analysed and the Trust and centre statistics are reported in the REP and ARC annual monitoring processes. However, data is not available to external examiners in this format at assessment boards or prior to the completion of their reports.

2.64   The University of Essex external examiner report form makes no mention of the need to comment on centres whereas UEL's report form asks whether external examiners were able to distinguish between students at each centre of delivery. While both university's report forms require the title of the course, neither indicate which, if any, national centres delivers the course and the Trust does not add this information. It is therefore not possible to determine whether all external examiners have commented on centre assessments. Some 2014-15 reports included comments about centres, but only one external examiner actually commented on the equivalence between centres and the Trust. This external examiner recognised the difficulty in making comparisons when sent a sample of anonymous scripts and, rather than accept the Trust's selected sample, asked for a grid of all students' marks and selected the ones he wanted; this allowed him to discriminate between centres.

2.65   While external examiners welcome the new marking system, and say it has led to greater consistency of marking, by providing the external examiner with anonymous scripts the external examiner is unable to make explicit comments on performance at each centre. The UEL 2015 REP report recommended to the Trust that the Trust's associate centres should respond to external examiner reports. Centres cannot easily do this if an external examiner does not comment on marks at that centre. The team **recommends** that the Trust works with external examiners to ensure that there are explicit comments on student performance at individual national centres.

2.66   The Trust has designed a robust marking and moderation process. It needs to ensure that external examiner reports refer to the national centres. Nevertheless, the review team considers that the Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*

Findings

2.67   The Trust sees annual monitoring as having been an integral and prominent component of its quality framework for many years, with regular reflection being necessary and intuitive in an institution where training is developmental. The requirements for annual monitoring and course review are set by the three regulators as set out in A 3.3. Annual monitoring is in place for all courses, with some variation of process for each awarding body. The most prevalent process has been the REP of UEL, with some devolution to the Trust. The process has three stages with a report being written, then considered at a portfolio meeting before all course reports are pulled together by an Associate Dean for consideration by AGQAC. There are feedback meetings with course staff. Validator oversight is through the UEL Collaborations Monitoring Sub-Committee. Essex has an Annual Review of Courses (ARC) process which does not necessarily have the same level of internal discussion but focuses more on action planning. Middlesex University's annual monitoring review process is similar. Postgraduate research degrees are subject to REP.

2.68   While templates vary, the range of data covered in each process is broadly similar in including admission, progression and achievement data, student evaluations and issues raised by student representatives. External examiner reports are reviewed annually as part of the Essex process, but are considered separately at course level in REP. Reports are prepared by Course Leaders with support from the Trust's AGQA Unit. There is induction and guidance with refresher training.

2.69   For 2015-16 the majority of courses are doing both REP (for UEL students being taught out) and ARC (for Essex students) to reflect the transfer of courses to Essex validation. ARC will increasingly become the predominant process, but the portfolio discussion aspects of REP will be retained internally.

2.70   Each national centre completes a separate annual monitoring form, which is then incorporated into overview reports. The Trust also considers comparative data relating to performance at different centres delivering a programme, and academic standards. There is also an overview of student feedback data and an overview of course committees. There was a general review of associate centres in 2014.

2.71   Processes for periodic review of courses are set by the three awarding bodies as outlined in Expectation A3.3. These are run by the awarding bodies, but the Trust takes part in reviews as required. Professional doctorates are also subject to a periodic review which entails in effect a revalidation of the programme. Research degrees are subject to periodic re-accreditation. There is external input into review processes.

2.72   All courses that have moved from UEL to Essex have been subject to revalidation, and will be subject to periodic review in due course. All national centres that are subject to tripartite agreements are subject to separate periodic review.

2.73   The design would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.74   The team read a range of documents relating to annual monitoring and periodic review, and met a range of staff and students.

2.75   The team found that annual review is generally well embedded and understood. Staff whom the team met showed familiarity with the process and its purpose. Examples of reviews seen by the team showed consideration of a full range of data, including external examiner reports and student feedback. The monitoring process produces action points, which are considered by AGQAC, and are followed up, resulting in year on year development. The Trust responds to any resulting recommendations from the validating body. The overview reports produced in relation to specific areas also identify and address areas for action.

2.76   The team did, however, note various ways in which processes might be strengthened. Some comments in annual monitoring reports were brief and general rather than analytical, and action points did not always pick up all the areas identified as needing improvement. The team would endorse the view of UEL that REP course action plans could be SMARTer. Staff whom the team met confirmed that reports were written by course leaders, and while portfolio meetings are valuable, it was not clear that all members of course teams are directly involved with review and actions in relation to annual monitoring. Students whom the team met were generally not aware of annual monitoring processes, and there were variations as regards minutes showing consideration of annual monitoring in Course Committees. The team therefore **recommends** that the Trust ensures that both staff and students are more actively and explicitly involved in annual monitoring processes.

2.77   While annual monitoring is carried out separately in relation to each national centre, action points in relation to specific centres are rarely identified in composite reports. In addition, although external examiners cover a course wherever it is delivered, they have little if any contact with individual centres, and only see data on specific centres at assessment boards, so there is little if anything in their reports relating to specific centres. The Trust might reflect on how annual oversight and action plans might identify specific actions in relation to specific centres where relevant.

2.78   Periodic review of course is well embedded and results in action plans. The Trust takes action in response to conditions and recommendations. The separate review of national centres delivering courses under tripartite agreements is also effective. Professional body requirements and oversight also help to ensure that courses are regularly reconsidered and developed.

2.79   The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low because in discharging its responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, the trust operates and takes part in effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.80   The Trust has a complaints and appeals policy. This policy is in alignment with the Trust's awarding bodies. For programmes awarded by The University of Essex and the UEL, the Trust has agreed joint procedures with those awarding bodies. For the sole programme validated by Middlesex University, the complaints and appeals procedure is the same as that operating at the University itself. Within the Trust there is a dedicated Student Complaints Liaison Officer who keeps track of all complaints that are logged and will keep all interested parties informed of the outcomes. The early stages of the complaints procedure are handled by the Trust, and typically complaints do not progress further than this level. Should the complainant be unhappy with the decision given by the Trust they are able to appeal to the Universities and eventually the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. With regards to academic appeals, the procedures that are laid down by the awarding bodies are the ones which are followed. In cases where the offence is not academic in nature, the Trust has its own policy for this.

2.81   The evidence seen by the review team, including the self-evaluation document and other documents, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.82   The review team examined the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place to engage students by examining documentation including policies for complaints and appeals. In addition to this the team also held meetings with teaching staff, students and student representatives.

2.83   The review team found that the policies and procedures for complaints and academic appeals work effectively in practice. In meeting support staff is became clear to the review team that those staff whose responsibility include complaints and appeals understand their responsibilities and work effectively to follow those procedures outlined in policies. The staff are supported by the Standard Operating Procedures which exist in this area. When meeting with students there seemed to be an overall lack of knowledge surrounding the exact process for complaints and academic appeals but students all indicated that they knew where they could access such information. The total level of complaints logged is low, and when speaking to staff and students about this, it appears that the informal feedback mechanisms present at the Trust head off most complaints from students before there is a need to engage in the formal complaints process.

2.84   The Trust has procedures for handling both complaints and academic appeals and these procedures are fair, accessible and are carried out in a timely manner. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.85   The Trust has a large provision which falls within the category of education with others. There are 213 students across nine different national centres. There are also three centres in Italy. This part of its provision is managed by two main types of collaborative arrangements, a tripartite agreement and a bipartite agreement. The type of agreements are based on the nature of partnerships with the Trust. There are two types of national centres, associate and alternative. Associate centres are governed by the tripartite agreement whereas the alternative centres are governed by the bipartite agreement.

2.86   There is one exception in the case of Northern School of Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy (NSCAP), where the centre has a tripartite agreement with UEL-Trust and NSCAP's, for most courses, and is governed by a bipartite agreement for one MA with The University of Essex.

2.87   National centres deliver the same courses as the Trust, same criteria for admissions is applied, the delivery is also comparable and the same assessments are used across board. Some centres have different timetables to meet local needs.

2.88   The Trust has effective arrangements for delivering and managing learning opportunities with others which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.89   The review team read documents including annual monitoring reports, AGQAC minutes and met staff and students, including those in the national centres.

2.90   The overall academic governance of education with the others is shared between the three parties. The awarding bodies carry out an institutional approval for all the associate centres. The maintenance if academic standards monitored by the relevant university committees. The awarding partners have designated individuals who oversee the quality assurance and enhancement of such partnerships.

2.91   The Trust applies the same principles for management of academic standards and learning opportunities, as it does for its own provision. The annual monitoring and review of the courses is also carried out in exactly the same manner as it is carried out for the Trust's own courses. National centres are required to complete a course REP.

2.92   For each centre there is a Trust-based liaison tutor and administrators for all centres who play a vital role with regard to the oversight and maintenance of standards within the centres.

2.93   The assessments and the marking criteria are the same regardless of the location. This assessment processes are managed centrally within the Trust. Course administrators within the Trust receive all the assessments and then this is distributed to all markers and subsequently the moderators. Similar processes is applied to the centres in Italy where the work is distributed between the Italian speaking markers from all Italian centres. National centre staff are involved in all processes such as marking, moderation and examination boards.

2.94   The external examiners are the same for all national centres and this ensures standards are comparable between all centres. The same principle is applied to the Italian centres where the externals are same for the centres in Italy and they are all Italian speaking. There is clearly defined process for gathering and compiling student feedback from the national centres which is considered by the AGQAC There is a review pro forma which Trust uses for the review of national centres. This brings together all the information from Centre submission, REP reports and external examiners. Besides the predefined annual monitoring processes the trust carried out a review of national centres in 2014, a common pro forma was used and a review report was subsequently published.

2.95   As the partnership is changing to The University of Essex from UEL, the former has carried out a site approval visit of the national centres. This looked at courses delivered, student numbers, resources, annual review processes other relevant policies and procedures and the governing agreements a detailed report was subsequently published which contains the details of approval.

2.96   There is also a placement learning provision, this is governed by a placement management policy. There are six postgraduate course that have student placement. This scope of the policy is clear and it outlines all the key areas which include the approval procedures, roles of students, responsibilities of placement provider, monitoring process and staffing needs. There are also placement handbooks available to cover relevant post graduate and doctoral courses. All principles of this policy are applied consistently throughout the Trust and the national centres. The assessment of the learning during placement is done through an agreed approach which is based on professional requirements.

2.97   The Trusts processes for working with other are in place and effective. The Expectation is therefore met with a low level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.98   There are six Professional Doctorate programmes validated by UEL and seven validated by The University of Essex. There are around 200 students on the doctoral student database. Most of the courses will be awarded by Essex University in the future with an exception of one course. All the doctorate students will stay on UEL courses for at least the next five years. The teach-out is being carefully managed through a transitional plan and there have been several meetings between the Trust, UEL and The University of Essex.

2.99   The UEL doctorates are governed by jointly agreed regulations while Essex courses are governed by Higher Degree Regulations. All applicants have to go through an interview with an academic as part of the admissions process. Course leaders have the ultimate decisions on applications.

2.100   For Essex, the code of practice document outlines governing procedures which deal with supervision allocation arrangements, frequency of meetings, replacement procedures, supervisory boards and problems with supervision. The supervision arrangements vary from course to course, however, for the selection of supervisors, consideration is given to suitability and relevance to nature of research and methodology. The Trust allocates at least two supervisors to each student. In the case of UEL the validated professional doctorates the first supervisor is called the Director of Studies. In some cases the student can be allocated a third supervisor as an adviser or clinical supervisor. The change of supervisor arrangements are outlined in the Standard Operating procedures document published by the Trust.

2.101   The Trust's arrangements for research degrees are effective for securing academic standards and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.102   The review team met postgraduate students and staff teaching on postgraduate courses. It also looked at postgraduate review reports, external examiner reports and validation reports.

2.103   There is a Trust-wide research strategy, which has one aim focusing on research and two aims focusing on training and development. There is a Research Degree Sub-Committee (TRDSC) which focuses on UEL-validated research degrees, especially in relation to the management and school level recommendation of student research registration and allied matters. Related tasks with The University of Essex are managed directly by the University. The doctorates are recognised or accredited by various external professional bodies for example, Health and Care Professions Council for doctorates in Child Community and Educational Psychology and the Association of Child Psychotherapists for the Professional Doctorate in Child Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. Students are made aware of course information through course handbooks on the VLE, teaching staff and course administrators. All the regulations governing the research degrees are made available to the students through the VLE.

2.104   TRDSC Committee reports to the Trust's AGAQC and partner universities' research degree committees. The Chair of AGAQC is also a member of UEL's research degree committee. TRDSC publishes an annual report which considers matters and data and includes monitoring of research programmes, admissions, and student progress. It also makes recommendations and creates an action plan. This report is also considered by AGAQC which also considers various other matters relating to research degrees. Postgraduate course statistics are considered in course annual review and enhancement plans. The review of progress of these REPs takes place in course level cluster meetings.

2.105   There is a Trust Research and Ethics Committee (TREC), which has the overall authority of considering and approving the applications from students enrolled on Essex Professional Doctorates and a number of UEL master's programmes for ethical approval of their respective research leading to an award. The Chair of this committee is also an ex-officio member of the UEL research ethics committee.

2.106   Research proposals for UEL-validated professional doctorates are considered for academic rigour, viability, resources and suitability, by research proposal review board which is also a subgroup of the Trust school research degree subcommittee. This board also has supervisors and external examiners as members. There is provision of a wider research community beyond the programme of study, such initiatives include an annual doctoral conference, a research week and online forums through the VLE. There is a cross-doctoral lecture series. The annual doctoral conference aims to bring the research students in contact with the wider community. This conference is open to all professional doctorate and PhD students as well as staff. The Trust recognises that research students can be provided within further opportunities to engage with the research communities within the awarding partners. The team **affirms** that initiatives are being taken to engage postgraduate research students in the Trust's wider research community.

2.107   There is an online doctorate students' forum through which the students are able to provide feedback and also engage with the wider community. There is also a joint provision of training and development workshops through UEL which includes ethical approval training. The Trust has a clearly defined training programme which is open for research supervisors and students. The students on postgraduate research programmes have the opportunity to complete an experience survey. A summary report is produced and an action plan is generated which deals with the outcomes of this survey. This action plan is considered by AGQAC. Research students also engage with the Student Experience Committee.

2.108   For the placements within the doctorate programmes, the Trust publishes placement handbooks for each cohort of students detailing the principles surrounding the placement. The Trust also has a placement management policy which sets out the overarching principle about approval of providers, role of providers, rights and responsibilities of students, staffing and monitoring and evaluation of placements.

2.109   The Trust ensures 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. The Expectation is therefore met with a low level of associated risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.111   The Trust has effective systems in place for course approval, admissions, learning and teaching, student support, student engagement, assessment, course review, complaints and appeals and working with others.

2.112   All 11 expectations are met with low levels of risk. There are three examples of good practice, the integration of academic study and clinical practice, the extensive online resources and the approval and marking of assessment tasks. There are three recommendations relating to feedback on student work, external examiner reports and the annual monitoring process. There is one affirmation concerning the engagement of postgraduate research students with the wider research community in the Trust.

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

3   Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1   The main source of information about the Trust's provision is the external website which contains information on the programmes available as well as the entry criteria and professional standards. The Trust has completed user testing on the website which resulted in substantial revision of the site. Information is the responsibility of the Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment team which is headed by the Director of Communications and Marketing. They report directly to the Director of Education and Training. The Trust itself has a substantial standard operating procedures for education and training and these apply directly to the production and dissemination of Information. These procedures detail who has the final sign-off on information and shows there is clear oversight of information.

3.2   Any information that is programme specific is checked by the universities. The University of East London conducts a web information audit of the Trust every three years. The Trust has created a Digital Projects Group which will oversee the website alongside the provision of the VLE. The VLE is in operation for all courses at the Trust itself but also for all the national centres. The VLE is a used a tool for providing information to students and is supplemented by the use of course handbooks. For prospective students information is available on the Trust's website and at open evenings. In addition to this the Trust has decided to publish a hard copy higher education prospectus for the first time in six years.

3.3   The evidence seen by the review team would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.4   The review team examined the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place for information by examining documentation including the policies for oversight, reviewing the website, VLE and handbooks and the new 2016 prospectus. The team also held meetings senior staff, support staff, the Director of Marketing and Communications and the Trust facilitator.

3.5   The policies and procedures for the provision of information works effectively in practice. When meeting with the senior and support staff it was clear to the review team that staff understood their responsibilities in relation to the provision of information. The Trust provided a demonstration of the VLE. This clearly showed that information was clear and accessible. However, when speaking to students an overriding comment was that they found the programmes codes to be confusing, especially when seeking information on further study or differentiating between courses. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the Trust improves the clarity of information about courses offered to prospective students to ensure its fitness for purpose.

3.6   Despite the recommendation in the area of information, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.8   The Trust follows the universities' procedures and uses its own processes to ensure that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. There is one recommendation concerning the clarity of course information for prospective students.

3.9   The review team concludes that the quality of 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 Trust characterises itself as having an ethos of development, taking steps to develop and improve its offering to students over a number of years. Staff respond constructively and actively to recommendations from validator and other external reports. Internal reviews also lead to developmental activity, including the 2014 Strategic Review, Shaping the Future. Significant recent examples of positive developments include the implementation of the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy 2014-17, and the moving of programmes into clusters with new Portfolio Managers.

4.2   The approach is that enhancement is integral to the Trust's Learning and Teaching Strategy. This Strategy has as a key strategic aim reviewing and improving student experience, and includes setting specific objectives relevant to enhancement. AGQAC has as a term of reference 'to promote and encourage innovation and development and to enhance the quality of student experience'. The Learning and Teaching Committee plays a key role in implementing enhancement. However, oversight of enhancement is primarily through AGQAC as that committee is able to assimilate a full range of reports on student achievement and experience, promoting development and identifying good practice. The Annual Quality Enhancement Report to AGQAC describes what has happened and looks forward to further developments. The Student Experience Committee also has relevant responsibilities. Some staff have specific responsibilities for enhancement, in particular the Associate Dean for Academic Governance and Quality Assurance.

4.3   In principle, annual monitoring has an enhancement focus, and this includes specific enhancement themes for each year. The annual Quality Enhancement Reports include coverage of centres of delivery. In 2013-14, there was a review of centres as an enhancement activity. There is a quality assurance and enhancement page on the website dealing with enhancement.

4.4   The design would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.5   The team read a range of documents relevant to enhancement processes and practice, and spoke to a range of staff and students.

4.6   Committees and individuals have roles in enhancement, and staff the team met showed a shared ethos of a positive openness to enhancement. However, it was not clear to the team that the approach taken was always systematic and proactive. While the use of annual Quality Enhancement Reports provides a helpful focus, there is a tendency to record positive developments rather than take a fully strategic approach. A number of recent developments have followed a recommendation by an external review rather than being generated internally, for example the establishment of the Learning and teaching Committee. Changes made are reviewed for effectiveness, though it is not clear this happens systematically. Annual monitoring has an enhancement focus, but the process could usefully be tightened, for example, in identifying and spreading good practice. It is likely that improvement happens informally, but there could be a more clearly articulated approach to spreading good practice.

4.7   Students expressed to the team the view that student feedback is a generator of enhancement activity, though they said that there could usefully be a more systematic and strategic approach to communicating enhancement activity to students.

4.8   Since 2014, the Trust has been going through a period of significant development. A major example is the implementation of the technology-enhanced learning (TEL) Strategy 2014-17, The team heard a range of very positive comments from staff and students about the benefits of the redesign and increasing use of the VLE, the value of the largely online library and embedded support tools, and the use of online submission of assessments. The strategic intervention to enable, support, and promote the use of technology-enhanced learning across the provision, including the incorporation of library and TEL staff on core Trust committees, is **good practice**.

4.9   The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low because deliberate steps are taken by the Trust to improve the quality of student learning opportunities, albeit that the approach could be more systematically strategic and more fully articulated.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.11   The Trust's enhancement strategy is included in its Learning and Teaching Strategy which makes use of information from students, annual monitoring and external examiners. The enhancement strategy is well documented and shared by all staff, especially with reference to TEL. There is one good practice relating to the TEL.

4.12   Therefore, the review team concludes that the Trust's enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1 The Trust seeks to ensure that all staff and students are competent with technology enhanced learning (TEL) and strives to include digital components in the curriculum. In order to realise this vision the Trust has appointed a Head of Technology Enhanced Learning who has drafted the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy for 2014-17. In order to embed TEL across the Trust, the Head of Technology Enhanced Learning is a member of a significant number of committees across the Trust. The TEL department also publishes a newsletter to update staff on developments.

5.2 In order to deliver on the embedding of digital literacy the Trust has a set of 10 strategic objectives which seek to deliver a successful implementation. Steps 1-4 of this plan involves the development of the VLE from a file repository to a learning tool. In the demonstration of the VLE to the review team, this has evidently been achieved, with the VLE now including far more than just files. The roll-out of e-assessment has been successful as a result of the developments in the VLE. The VLE works across all the national centres and the Trust itself.

5.3 Digital literacy is also detailed on the VLE with a course that students can take. It outlines the seven principles of Digital Literacy. The course enables students to assess their own level of digital literacy before moving on to develop the skills which they have identified as weaker.

5.4 Students are able to make use of plagiarism-detection software to check over drafts of work, and this is available to them via the VLE. Assistance in this area and the wider VLE is available by phone and email. This support is provided by the TEL department rather than IT. The support network is the same for the Trust as it is for all national centres. Staff in the TEL department have a good grasp of the strategy and how they can embed digital literacy across the Trust.

5.5 Some programmes are rolling out assessments which contain a significant level of digital literacy. These programmes have introduced webinars which students host and present their findings to programme tutors and their peers. This technology is still in its early stages but the Trust is looking at expanding this where appropriate.

5.6 The overall finding is that the embedding of digital literacy is well and truly in motion but will require a few more years before the Strategy is fully implemented with all staff and students comfortable with TEL. That withstanding, the Trust has taken clear steps at a strategic level to start the journey towards full digital literacy.

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 22-25 of the
Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

Flexible and distributed learning
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.
See also **distance learning**.

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

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

Good practice
A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

Learning opportunities
The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

Learning outcomes
What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

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

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

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