



Higher Education Review (Plus) of Tertiary Education Services Ltd t/a New College of the Humanities

February 2015

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Plus) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Tertiary Education Services Ltd trading as New College of the Humanities. The review took place from 9 to 11 February 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Miss Maxina Butler-Holmes
- Dr Alan Howard
- Mrs Sarah Mullins (student reviewer)

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the New College of the Humanities 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 (Plus) 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.

In Higher Education Review (Plus) there is also a check on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

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

In reviewing the New College of the Humanities the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2014-15 are Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Student Employability,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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

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

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

⁴ Higher Education Review (Plus): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Tertiary Education Services Ltd t/a New College of the Humanities

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Tertiary Education Services Ltd t/a New College of the Humanities.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Tertiary Education Services Ltd t/a New College of the Humanities.

- the embedding of a research culture within the student learning experience (Expectation B3)
- the effective use of the tutorial system to support teaching and learning (Expectation B3)
- the innovative opportunities provided by the NCH diploma for interdisciplinary learning (Expectation B3)
- the systematic process for termly review of individual student performance, progression and development (Expectations B4 and B6)
- the contribution of visiting fellows to enhancing professional awareness and employability skills (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Tertiary Education Services Ltd t/a New College of the Humanities.

By May 2015:

- ensure that the status of the NCH diploma as a non-credit bearing award is made explicit to all stakeholders (Expectation C).

By September 2015:

- ensure effective representation and regular monitoring of the collective student voice at all levels of the organisational structure (Expectation B5)
- further develop the annual programme reporting process to ensure consistency and to monitor formally agreed actions (Expectation B8).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Tertiary Education Services Ltd t/a New College of the Humanities is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- the development of the assessment practice document and its related policies for approval and implementation at the start of the new academic year (Expectation B6).

Theme: Student Employability

Employability is an integral part of the College's strategy. It is delivered through the Professional Programme which is a component of the NCH Diploma. The Professional Programme is focused on the needs of students as they start their careers and is primarily delivered by professionals from the work place who come into the College as visiting fellows.

At the end of their first and second years students attend a seminar programme and undertake two major projects that involve real problems facing organisations. As well as developing capabilities relevant to entry to employment, the seminar programme supports the development of wider academic skills. Students complete written assignments and presentations which, alongside the project work, contribute to the assessment of the NCH Diploma.

The College delivers a personalised approach to supporting students' professional development through a strand of the Professional Programme branded as 'My Beautiful Career', where speakers are invited to talk about their jobs to small groups of students, and through individual careers counselling and advice with the Director of Professional Development. There are also opportunities for students to gain work experience through internships.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at Tertiary Education Services Limited t/a New College of the Humanities during 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](#) (Plus).

About the Tertiary Education Services Limited t/a New College of the Humanities

Tertiary Education Services Ltd trading as New College of the Humanities (the College), is an independent college founded by the philosopher Professor AC Grayling with the ambition, over time, of becoming a leading global centre of outstanding scholarship and teaching. The College admitted its first students in September 2012 and has been offering tuition in economics, English, history, law, philosophy, and politics and international relations for undergraduate degrees of the University of London International Programme. For the forthcoming academic year 2015-16, the College will be delivering programmes in the same subject areas for degrees validated by Southampton Solent University. In addition to the undergraduate curriculum, the College offers its own diploma which provides studies in complementary subjects including applied ethics, logic and critical thinking, science literacy, and a professional development programme. The College is located Bedford Square, Bloomsbury in London. There are currently 141 full-time students.

The College mission is to foster a collegial environment in which learning, debate and the sharing of ideas is central, and in which all members of the College treat one another as partners in the quest for knowledge and intellectual enlargement. In delivering its strategic aims the College characterises its approach as enhancing teaching, learning and

assessment to support an interdisciplinary approach to study; adapting the 'best of the best' approach to achieve high levels of student satisfaction and outstanding academic results; and providing students with the capabilities that will enable them to thrive both professionally and personally after graduation.

The self-evaluation document submitted by the College as part of this review identifies three key challenges faced by the College: the need to tell the wider world about the quality of the education provided by the College and the case for the value of an education in the humanities and social sciences to employers; to gain highly trusted sponsor status to allow the College to recruit internationally; and, as a small provider, adapting to the regulatory framework for higher education.

Explanation of the findings about Tertiary Education Services Ltd t/a New College of the Humanities

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College does not have degree awarding powers and currently offers tuition in preparation for entry to external examinations for six University of London International Programmes (ULIP). No formal operating agreement exists with the University of London and this provision is outside the scope of Expectation A1.

1.2 The College plans to deliver 22 major minor programme combinations in partnership with Southampton Solent University (SSU) from 2015. These qualifications adhere to the principles laid out in the University's Memorandum of Agreement and Academic Handbook. These specify the external reference points, including *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), which form the basis of programme approval. The College will be responsible for delivering programmes of study and maintaining the academic standards of this University.

1.3 SSU is responsible for the assurance of standards of the validated awards delivered at the College while the College is responsible for the development, design and delivery of programmes. The College is responsible for informing SSU of any proposed modifications to validated programme specifications and unit descriptors, and the internal review of the quality of the student experience. Link tutors from the University provide academic support,

attend the College's Quality Assurance Network meetings and the Programme Team meetings. Oversight of programme development, liaison with the awarding body, and support for faculty leaders (known as convenors) in preparation of validation documents and programme specifications is the responsibility of the recently established College post of Quality Assurance Officer (QAO). These arrangements and regulatory frameworks enable the College in theory to meet Expectation A1 of the Quality Code.

1.4 The review team looked at relevant documentation for programme development and approval, including quality assurance policies and procedures, to confirm that these enable the College to meet Expectation A1. The team tested the approach taken by talking to the University's Head of Programme Development, senior College staff and others who will be involved in programme delivery.

1.5 The review team found that appropriate reference was made to the FHEQ in writing programme specifications for new University validated programmes. University guidance on level descriptors also informed this process. There is evidence that mapping levels in the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and programme learning outcomes is undertaken. Tables appended to each programme specification map Subject Benchmark Statement thresholds to learning outcomes. Conditions arising from the validation process have been met.

1.6 Good communication is evident between the University and College facilitated by regular liaison between the QAO and the University's Head of Programme Development and her team. Senior staff understand the notion of maintaining standards set by its awarding partner and are clear about their varying responsibilities. The QAO has supported the process of staff development that ensures that key staff understand external reference points, including the Quality Code and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.7 This partnership is a new initiative and development of provision is ongoing but the College has successfully met conditions for validation and has discharged its responsibilities effectively in this context. Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met and the associated level of risk in this area is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.8 As a provider of tuition for students entered for external examinations of the University of London International Programmes (ULIP), the College operates autonomously and its responsibilities are currently limited in respect of Expectation 2.1. College governance is overseen by an Academic Board that generally meets three times a year and consists of senior College staff including the Master. The Board delegates some business to subcommittees (including the Student-Staff Liaison Committee) and ad hoc working groups (including programme review and validation). New governance structures, frameworks and policy are in development in order to align with the requirements of its new degree-awarding partner for programmes intended for delivery from 2015-16.

1.9 In the context of its limited responsibilities for current provision, the structures in place enable the College to meet Expectation A2.1 of the Quality Code.

1.10 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the College's processes by scrutinising documents setting out programme validation and meeting senior management, teaching staff and students.

1.11 The review team found that deliberative steps are being taken to facilitate a transition to a new governance structure, including development of committees and relevant policies. The respective responsibilities of the College and the degree-awarding partner are set out in the Memorandum of Agreement and Academic Handbook and these appear to be well understood by College staff. The College will operate joint assessment boards with SSU and a College assessment policy has been approved by the University (see Expectation B6). The College will have a role in relation to procedures for extenuating circumstances, academic appeals, and academic misconduct and the review team found appropriate policy in development.

1.12 Governance arrangements are appropriate for current provision and deliberative and timely steps are being taken to meet the requirements of its new degree-awarding partner. Therefore 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

1.13 It is the awarding bodies' responsibility to maintain definitive records of each programme and the College is responsibility for making these available to students and ensuring they are used as a reference point for delivery and assessment of programmes and throughout the monitoring and review processes. Programme specifications for University of London International Programmes (ULIP) currently being taught at the College are produced by ULIP. For the new Southampton Solent University (SSU) programmes, programme specifications were produced by the Convenors and validated by SSU.

1.14 Current ULIP specifications are available to students through the University of London's virtual learning environment (VLE), the College's website and additionally, where possible, the College makes these available to students in hard copy. Programmes specifications for SSU future programmes will be produced to a set format which has been informed by and adhere to SSU requirements; specifications contain relevant, detailed information. The programme specifications allow the Expectation to be met, and reflect the Indicators of sound practice.

1.15 In order to test this expectation the review team looked at the self-evaluation document, programme specifications for ULIP and SSU, information for students, information for staff and discussed the use and availability of programme specifications with staff and students.

1.16 Students were fully aware of programme specifications, where they could be found and how they were used. Staff commented on the use of programme specifications to evaluate formative assessments and inform current delivery as well as discussing the design of future programme specifications and the awareness of the need for programme specifications to be the foundation of unit descriptions and ultimately inform assessment and delivery. The College Assessment Policy confirms the use of programme specifications for assessment.

1.17 For the proposed programmes validated by SSU, final responsibility for programme specifications within the college will lie with the Quality Assurance Officer or Registrar and these will serve as the definitive course record, subject to validation. The College will be required to inform SSU of any proposed modifications to the validated programme specifications adhering to the SSU Handbook.

1.18 The review team concludes that the College meets the responsibilities for the Expectation about the use of definitive programme records 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

1.19 The overall responsibility for the approval of the SSU programmes resides with the awarding body and its policies and procedures for programme approval processes were followed during the 2014 validations. This is described in the University's Academic Handbook (Collaborative Provision Process) which covers the role of approvals panels and reinforced in the Memorandum of Association. Section 2 of the Academic Handbook includes all quality assurance policies.

1.20 The University approved the College as a collaborative partner in July 2014. Through its provider profile report, the University assigned each College subject to an associated faculty to commence the process under the unit approvals and course modification policy of the Academic Handbook. The development of the new degree programmes was defined as being under a 'validation agreement'; this process is described in more detail in Expectation B1. This culminated in an approval event with an appropriate panel which included four external academics.

1.21 The College does not have a formal agreement in respect of the University of London International Programmes and is not involved in its academic approval processes.

1.22 The College, through the operation of its Academic Board, ensures the strategic oversight for the systematic maintenance of the processes for approval of taught programmes. The Board meetings have monitored the progress of the conditions arising from the approval of the new degree portfolio. These arrangements enable the College to meet Expectation A3.1 in design.

1.23 The review team looked at the effectiveness of these processes by examining documentation relating to the development and approval of programmes. The team also held meetings with senior staff including a representative of the awarding body, teaching staff and students.

1.24 The team found that the processes for programme approval work effectively. A working group was established as a subcommittee of Academic Board to develop the new programmes which reported to Academic Board. The team heard that members of the senior team, including all Convenors, held meetings with the Head of Programme Development and Link Tutors from the University to prepare the approval documentation. Unit descriptors and programme specifications developed through an iterative process leading to their presentation for the formal approval panel.

1.25 The approval report required the College to respond to three conditions: to revise some programme and unit learning outcomes to align more appropriately with levels of the FHEQ; to plan a strategic approach towards staff development in quality assurance matters; and to develop a teaching learning and assessment policy.

1.26 The College appointed a Quality Assurance Officer to support the academic staff in responding to the conditions, particularly in relation to compliance with academic frameworks and the development of programme documentation. A validation team comprising the Master, Registrar, QAO and Convenors progressed the conditions. The University confirmed these conditions had been met in December 2014. The Validation Team subsequently assumed a proactive role in the production of a range of academic policies which are discussed under Expectation A3.3.

1.27 The review team heard that the first Quality Assurance Network meeting had included a session on the whole of Section 2, Quality Assurance policies, of the University's Academic Handbook. This had been welcomed by College staff in their ongoing preparations for the new degree programmes.

1.28 Within the context of the developing partnership with a new awarding body, the evidence from documentation and meetings show that the College has fulfilled its responsibilities for programme approval. This ensures that the academic standards of the degrees are set at the appropriate level and within the academic framework and regulations of the awarding body. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.29 The University of London International Programmes (ULIP) operate under the academic regulatory framework of that awarding body. The ULIP Regulations and relevant programme specifications are publicised on the College's website and students have access to the awarding body's VLE.

1.30 The Memorandum of Agreement with SSU contains a clearly stated responsibilities table with Schedule 2 identifying the sections of the Academic Handbook relating to the policies and regulations for managing quality and assuring standards. This includes the policy covering the purpose and conduct of assessment boards.

1.31 The College Assessment Policy provides a reference point for staff with regard to expectations for marking, moderation and providing feedback on assessments. Academic Board is responsible for reviewing the policy and ensuring alignment with the awarding bodies. The policy covers approaches to marking including grading criteria and marking scales and moderation. The College has further developed its policies, regulations and processes for assessment to fulfil its responsibilities with SSU through the Teaching and Learning Strategy and Assessment Practice publications.

1.32 The assessment approaches, which include both formative and summative, for the achievement of credit at module and programme levels are stated in the relevant unit descriptors or programme specifications.

1.33 These frameworks and approaches will enable the design, approval and monitoring of assessment strategies to set appropriate learning outcomes for the achievement of academic standards and, therefore, enables the College in theory to meet Expectation A3.2.

1.34 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements for assessment through reading a range of policy documents. The team also held meetings with senior staff, a representative of the awarding body, academic and support staff, and students.

1.35 The team found that the assessment for the ULIP is through external examinations towards the end of the academic year. Students are referred to the regulations on the awarding body's VLE. The team heard that support staff play a connecting role in assuring correct registration to modules and arranging examination entry. The College's commitment to a formative assessment strategy through the effective use of the tutorial model, which is described in subsequent sections of this report, has enabled students to successfully achieve relevant learning outcomes.

1.36 The team saw and heard evidence that programme assessment strategies and the achievement of learning outcomes have been discussed during the pre-approval stage and subsequently as the College responded to the conditions regarding assessment. The

approval event held in July 2014 concluded with some conditions relating to the assessment strategy. Unit descriptors were reviewed to differentiate the assessment requirements at levels four and five; these conditions were confirmed as being met.

1.37 The Teaching and Learning Strategy notes that assessment will 'provide students with diverse opportunities to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes'. This was in response to a recommendation from the approval panel. Staff with whom the team met confirmed that the Assessment Strategy is becoming more flexible and moving away from the external examination model for the next intake of students.

1.38 An Assessment Practice document was in draft form at the time of this review. This is designed to align with the Assessment Policy and the Teaching and Learning Strategy and provides guidance on developing assessments including the use of formative and summative assessment, peer review for verification, double marking and liaison with external examiners. Grading criteria and grade marking help to ensure the quality, consistency and transparency of marking practice. The Assessment Practice document and its constituent policies and procedures is discussed in section B6 where the review team affirms the development of the assessment practice document and its related policies for approval and implementation at the start of the new academic year.

1.39 The review team heard details of the Quality Assurance Network meeting in which the University had presented sessions on the academic regulations and the conduct of course and programme assessment boards. In addition, this provided training for Convenors and other senior staff on the processes required for the production of assessment briefs, moderation and liaison with external examiners. The College has produced policies, including those for extenuating circumstances, academic appeals and misconduct.

1.40 The evidence from documentation and meetings show that the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for the award of credit and qualifications. Assessment is used effectively to develop students to demonstrate achievement of the relevant learning outcomes. The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met both in design and operation, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.41 There is no requirement for the College to directly engage with the University of London International Programmes in its monitoring and review processes. The SSU requirements of the College are articulated in the Operational Management Schedule as part of the Memorandum of Agreement. The responsibilities of each party are clearly set out in the accompanying Academic Handbook. The University undertakes to organise the partnership management group and to attend programme team meetings, while the College undertakes to organise programme meetings and to attend the partnership management group. A Quality Assurance Network, organised by SSU, is planned with regular meetings throughout the year.

1.42 Under the emerging arrangements the University will provide the programme review template, attend programme meetings, review modifications as part of the partnership management group and conduct interim partnership review. The College introduced annual programme monitoring reporting in September 2014 to prepare for this responsibility and applied it to the University of London International Programmes. A summary paper identifying themes and potential areas for action was presented to the Academic Board which exercises strategic oversight of monitoring and review processes. These approaches enable the College processes to meet Expectation A3.3 in the design of the process.

1.43 The review team assessed the effectiveness of these approaches by examining the annual programme reports and papers for Academic Board. The team also talked to senior staff, a representative from the awarding body, academic and support staff, and students.

1.44 The review team found that new documents and procedures have been or are in the process of being produced including an eighteen month training and development programme, a teaching and learning strategy and assessment policy. The Quality Assurance Network held its inaugural meeting in January 2015 which provided the opportunity to confirm the responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards through the monitoring and review processes.

1.45 There is a three-part procedure for annual programme reporting. Each Convenor reviews their programme under the headings of: recruitment; progression; achievement; retention; feedback from module evaluations and the Staff Student Liaison Committee and consideration of external examiner reports. The second stage is a peer review meeting chaired by the Quality Assurance Officer with critique from another Convenor. The summary report to Academic Board discussed emerging themes from the peer review of Annual Programme Reports. The review team confirmed that this approach had taken place. The process is described more specifically in section B8 where the team also makes a recommendation that the reporting and monitoring processes be further developed.

1.46 Overall, the team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met in both design and operation with a low level of risk.

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

1.47 The College uses external expertise in programme development and validation. External academic and employer input is sought during new programme development and SSU uses external representation on validation panels. Link tutors from the University provide academic support and advice to subject convenors. These frameworks and associated guidance enable the College to meet Expectation A3.4.

1.48 The review team tested the use of external expertise by reading annual programme review reports, minutes of the approval event and the Quality Assurance Network, and through meetings with College staff and the University's Head of Programme Development.

1.49 External examiners are not currently appointed by the College and the College does not assess summative work or participate in assessment boards for ULIP. External examiners for the ULIP programmes are appointed by the University of London and comment on the overall exam performance of ULIP's global candidates rather than College provision specifically. However, the team found that, where appropriate, reference is made to these reports in annual programme review and this process is transferable to the new validated programmes due to be offered from 2015. Processes are in place for appointment of external examiners to oversee these programmes (see Expectation B7).

1.50 Visiting professors were consulted on the new programmes at an early stage, and had the opportunity to review and comment on proposals before they were put forward to the partner institution. University link tutors were assigned for each subject area and the team found an effective working relationship between the College and University staff. Link tutors continue to liaise with the Programme Convenors and will attend the Quality Assurance Network meetings.

1.51 Taking into account the scope of current provision, including limited role of external examiners, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.52 In reaching its judgement about academic standards, the review team considered its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All the Expectations in this area are met and the risk in each case is judged to be low with no recommendations arising.

1.53 The College currently offers tuition to support students for entry to external examinations for University of London International Programmes and is preparing to offer degrees validated by Southampton Solent University for intake in October 2015-16. The team found that arrangements in relation to Part A of the Quality Code are appropriate for the College's current provision, and that deliberative and timely steps are being taken to meet the requirements of its new degree-awarding partner and the responsibilities for maintaining academic standards in the future.

1.54 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the threshold academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the College's degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval

Findings

2.1 Since the College opened in 2012 it has provided tuition for students on six degree programmes of the University of London International Programmes. Study guides are produced by the awarding body for the prescribed curricula. During 2013-14 the College began to design and develop its own inter-disciplinary degree programmes in collaboration with SSU. Overall, while the responsibility for approvals rests with the awarding bodies and as noted in Expectation A3.1, the College has followed the clear procedure for programme design and development as laid out in the Academic Handbook. A Quality Assurance Officer was appointed in March 2014 to strengthen the management structure and guide the programme design and development processes.

2.2 The major-minor combination fits with the College's strategic goals for learning of intellectual breadth and it acknowledges the complexities of the inter-disciplinary nature of the model.

2.3 The Academic Board has oversight of new programme developments and firstly established working groups composed of Subject Convenors under its auspices to collaborate on the major-minor NCH degree framework. Subsequently, the Validation Team, led by the Master, also included the Convenor for the Professional Programme, the Quality Assurance Officer and Registrar. Progress was updated as a standing agenda item for Academic Board. The review team concludes that the design of these processes allowed the College to align its approach to meet the Expectation.

2.4 The team analysed the processes in operation through the examination of information including: minutes of meetings; the approvals and conditions report and programme proposal forms. Furthermore, the team held meetings with the Master, senior and academic staff, visiting fellows and students.

2.5 The team found that the processes work effectively in practice at this stage, although it is widely acknowledged that they are in their infancy. The Quality Assurance Network led by the University and the eighteen month staff development plan provide the mechanisms through which the processes for the development and evaluation of programmes will further evolve.

2.6 The validation and approval reports confirm that the College discharged its responsibilities for the setting of academic standards and for consideration of the quality of learning opportunities. Convenors lead on programme design which results in a programme proposal for the major and minor credit structures within the subject; these form the basis for subsequent programme specifications.

2.7 Programmes are developed through an iterative process which engages subject peers across disciplines, professional support staff and students. The use of visiting professors and visiting fellows provides evidence of externality to the process. The programme proposal form requires tangible evidence of student engagement and input into

the writing of aims and learning outcomes or teaching learning and assessment strategies; this included face-to-face consultations. Students with whom the team met confirmed the opportunities to be involved in the development of programmes. Staff spoke enthusiastically of their direct involvement in curricular design. The 'strong interdisciplinary ethos apparent in the working of the subject convenors' was commended by the approvals panel.

2.8 The Validation Team led on gathering feedback into the design stage and addressing the conditions following approval. This proved an effective way to show the systematic review of programmes specifications and unit descriptors.

2.9 The review team heard that the SSU Link Tutors liaise with subject peers in further developing units and in the review of assessment methods. Briefing sessions were held regarding the articulation of programme and unit learning outcomes along with support in assuring consistency across level descriptors. Revisions were made to the mapping of some units to the relevant programme learning outcomes.

2.10 Senior and academic staff whom the team met demonstrated an awareness and understanding of the FHEQ and level descriptors and have evidently benefitted through the experience of writing learning outcomes. The creation of the Quality Assurance Officer role facilitates the five key academic staff working within a structured, technical approach. This is planned to become further embedded through the 18-month staff training and development plan.

2.11 Overall, the team concludes that there is an understanding of the stages involved in the design of, and preparation for approval of, programmes which have been systematically applied. The Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission*

Findings

2.12 The College undertakes recruitment, selection and enrolment of appropriate students adhering to the eligibility criteria outlined in the programme specifications.

2.13 Students are recruited through various open days and College information supplied through the College website and Prospectus. Policies and procedures for selection and admission are set out in the Admission Policy and Admission Checklist.

2.14 Academic Board is responsible for setting entry criteria which are at or above the minimum level required by the awarding body. All applications are checked by the Admissions Manager, the Student Support Coordinator (SSC) and the Registrar, to ensure they meet the necessary entry requirements and to check that all required elements of an application are present. Applicants are required to submit a piece of written work and a reference which aids selection alongside a formal interview. The Admission Policy sets out the current procedures, including outlining the offer-making process, which are reviewed to highlight areas for enhancement. Complaints procedures are available and outlined in College's Admissions Complaints Policy which shows a clear accessible procedure with clear time frames given. The admissions procedures outlined meet the Expectation and reflect the Indicators of sound practice.

2.15 In order to test this expectation the review team reviewed policies and procedures relating to admissions, the information available to staff and students and discussed recruitment, selection and admission with staff and students.

2.16 The College's strategic plan to recruit ambitious, academically gifted and motivated students is supported by a rigorous admissions process that enables selection of appropriate students. Students are recruited through various methods including open days and personal consultations and information is available through the College website and the prospectus. The College website includes an applying page and video which give clear, accessible information to students regarding the admissions process. The College Prospectus gives clear, accessible information explaining the application process, the curriculum and the culture of the institution alongside offering information on available support, opportunities for social events and information regarding accommodation.

2.17 All students are interviewed, which can be through an online video interview to increase accessibility. All interviews are recorded to ensure objectivity. The selection process includes the submission of a sample of written work and an academic reference. Where the applicant has non-standard qualifications, or where the applicant narrowly misses the qualifications for the standard offer for a course, the application is referred to the admissions tutors. The interview process is clearly defined for staff and support is available through the student support team.

2.18 The Admissions Checklist defines the various information sent to students throughout the application process, including communication regarding offers of a place. The College operates a 'buddy system' where new students are paired with current students to aid the transition and incorporates a robust induction process for both new and returning

students. Students spoke highly of the commitment of the admission team to ensuring students had sufficient information and an easy transition into higher education, discussing the positive nature of having a dedicated member of the admissions team who they felt were approachable and who, alongside the Student Support Adviser, offered continued support throughout the admission process.

2.19 The College conducted a thorough review of the admissions process and procedures which resulted in enhanced procedures with regards to accessibility, consistency and consideration of the Quality Code. All student contact is collated on the admissions database to enable feedback for selection decisions and the College intends to expand the monitoring and analysis of admissions data. The College considered the impact of increased recruitment throughout the admissions review process and it is confident its procedures are capable of adapting to increased student numbers and is committed to ensuring the maintenance of the current level of support offered.

2.20 In conclusion, the review team found that the admission, selection and recruitment procedures are robust, transparent and inclusive, and assisted prospective students in making informed decisions. The review team therefore 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

2.21 The College's approach to meeting this expectation is set out in its new Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Strategy aims to develop a collegial environment in which learning, debate and the sharing of ideas is central. Students are encouraged to think across discipline boundaries and connect their academic study to experience of life in general. Students study a University of London International Programmes (ULIP) and must complete the NCH Diploma, which is not a credit bearing qualification. The College will provide 22 new major minor programme combinations validated by SSU from 2015.

2.22 Provision of formal and informal training opportunities for staff is integral to the Teaching and Learning Strategy and a new Staff Development Strategy has been created in order to comply with requirements of its validating partner. In theory this strategic approach enables the College to the Expectation.

2.23 The review team tested and evaluated the effectiveness of its approach by scrutinising relevant policies and procedures, accessing the VLE, and through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

2.24 Senior academic staff act as subject Convenors and module content, informed by ULIP curriculum guides, is delivered by permanent and sessional academic staff. Staff are research active with regular publication of books and academic articles. The College has a developing research culture with two research centres and a collegial interdisciplinary research club. The College benefits from a professoriate of notable visiting professors. Students attend talks delivered by the professoriate and it was evident that students are encouraged to engage with scholarly debate and with the research culture of the College. Students view their tutors as leaders in their field and enjoy linking their research to the curriculum being studied. The review team considers the embedding of a research culture within the student learning experience to be **good practice**.

2.25 A one-to-one academic tutorial system underpins curriculum delivery. Weekly tutorials focus on discussion of formative essays to enable reflection and to identify strengths and weaknesses. All summative assessment is managed by the University of London and delivered in end-of-year examinations. The College plans to grow cohort size gradually, adding resource as necessary in order to maintain the low staff to student ratio and provide space resource that enables the tutorial system to continue to operate. High student satisfaction is currently evident and the review team finds the effective use of the tutorial system to support teaching and learning to be **good practice**.

2.26 The NCH Diploma consists of contextual modules which students select from modules offered under degree programmes, core modules and the Professional Programme focused on developing employability. The Diploma is not a credit bearing qualification but completion is compulsory alongside the student's main programme of study. Completion of modules from outside the main programme of study enables the College to deliver its strategic aim to encourage students to think across discipline boundaries. This inter-disciplinarity is embedded in the major minor structure of the newly validated programmes.

The review team considers that the innovative opportunities provided by the NCH diploma for interdisciplinary learning is **good practice**.

2.27 A staff development programme is being implemented with content focusing on aspects of quality assurance, use of technology, networking and enabling staff to engage with the Higher Education Academy. A Teaching and Learning Dissemination event which will be a forum for discussing best practice is planned for August 2015. Staff at all levels appear willing to engage with and to value the opportunities provided. Academic staff from one Faculty attended training sessions on presentation and public speaking offered to students as part of their Professional Programme. New members of staff are expected to hold or be working towards fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.

2.28 Students are positive about their educational experience, including small class sizes, knowledgeable staff and the overall College culture. Students find that staff are responsive to their needs, generally supportive and accessible. Appropriate student information and module specific content is provided through the VLE and parts of the Professional Programme use interactive aspects of this technology including use of discussion forums.

2.29 Overall, the review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met and the associated level of risk is low. A number of features of good practice are identified under this area.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.30 The Teaching and Learning strategy articulates the College's aim to foster a collegial atmosphere through which students develop their personal and academic potential.

2.31 Student attend a weekly one-to-one meeting with a subject tutor who oversees their academic progress on a specific course (see Expectation B3), and a termly meeting called a 'Collection' with their Subject Convenor who oversees their academic progress through the programme. Study skills support is provided at induction, in tutorials and as part of the Professional Programme seminar programme. Academic information, including programme handbooks, is made available to students electronically.

2.32 Personal tutors are assigned to all students from among the academic staff by the student support office, which includes a full-time support coordinator and support adviser and which provides an open-door access point for students requiring advice and information. Policy relating to the new validated programmes is in development, including an extenuating circumstances policy.

2.33 The strategies, procedures and guidance that the College has in place enable it to meet the Expectation.

2.34 The personal tutor system is appropriately organised and works to the evident satisfaction of students. Personal tutors help monitor student's progress and try to catch potential problems before they become serious. Initial meetings are scheduled for Freshers' Week and thereafter termly, but ad hoc meetings may be arranged should the need arise. Students were impressed by the level of access to staff and also by visiting lecturers' willingness to respond to email questions.

2.35 The termly Collection where student progress is discussed provides a personalised approach to supporting student progression and development. Meetings with at least two members of academic staff consider reports received by unit convenors and progress is discussed and goals set. This system supplements the academic and personal tutorial system. The review team identifies as **good practice** the systematic process for termly review of individual student performance, progression and development.

2.36 The College Welfare Policy outlines the support students may expect and the student support office provides effective day-to-day oversight of welfare matters. Students may complete a medical disclosure form at enrolment and declare any additional needs. Student support office staff liaise with relevant academic and senior staff to discuss and implement agreed reasonable adjustments. The College will arrange counselling where a need is identified.

2.37 Extenuating circumstances cases relating to academic programmes are handled by ULIP. However, the student support office is proactive in providing guidance to students and ensuring that relevant deadlines are met. Students provided examples of other support received including help with accommodation difficulties. The review team was impressed by the way the Student Support Coordinator and the Student Support Adviser discharge their responsibilities and by their evident enthusiasm for engaging with students.

2.38 Students are members of Senate House Library and have access to learning resources through the VLE. A system is in place to ensure updated reading lists are sent to the library. Meeting demand is sometimes challenging but students appear satisfied with provision. Feedback is sought from students in various ways including a facilities survey with appropriate responses provided. In response to student feedback the College's wireless computer access has recently been upgraded. Employability is firmly embedded as one third of the compulsory NCH Diploma (Professional Programme) and students have one-to-one careers meetings in the Office for Professional Development. This provision is covered in more detail under the Theme.

2.39 Overall, the review team found strong evidence that there are effective processes to monitor and evaluate resources and support mechanisms which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Expectation B4 is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.40 Student engagement at the College operates on various levels including individual participation in module evaluation and facilities' surveys, student representation on the College's Student-Staff Liaison Committee and informal meetings with Convenors. Opportunities are outlined in The Student Engagement Statement which is available on the College website.

2.41 The College aims to create and maintain an open culture for students to express their viewpoints and concerns through both formal and informal mechanisms. Personal tutor meetings, course tutorials and support staff discussion aid informal student engagement. In addition, feedback is received from all students through end-of-term module questionnaires and the annual facilities questionnaire. Formal structures such as Student-Staff Liaison Committee and Students' Union meetings also enable student representatives to raise issues or concerns. Student representatives are made aware of the expectations attached to their role and are trained appropriately. The opportunities outlined by the College meet the Expectation and reflect the Indicators of sound practice.

2.42 The review team tested this expectation by reviewing information for students, examples of student feedback, information for student representatives and examining minutes of meetings where students are present. The review team also discussed student engagement with the Master, staff and students.

2.43 The College's tutorial system and relatively small student population enables various opportunities for informal student engagement. The culture and environment of the College allows for in-depth student engagement with teaching and learning and the ability for students to help shape their learning experience. Students are regularly surveyed on their educational experience through module evaluations and various feedback requests which have evolved to ensure enhanced quality of the feedback received. Feedback is collated and disseminated through email and the College website by the Student Support Coordinator. Both students and staff offered examples of action taken from feedback.

2.44 The College has an active student representation system. Student representatives are trained through the NUS website and all student representatives are made aware of the expectations related to their role through the use of a job description. The Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) meets termly and includes representation from all programmes, including core subjects and the Professional Programme. It is well used as a forum to discuss both positive aspects of the course and any potential issues and is chaired by the Master and attended by a variety of staff, which ensures the student voice is heard at all levels of the College. Minutes of meetings are circulated to student representatives and uploaded to the VLE for accessibility. Students feel listened to and believe the College is successful in overcoming student concerns and addressing issues.

2.45 The lack of autonomy involved with ULIP makes student engagement with programme design difficult, however, students have been consulted in the design of the proposed SSU programmes. Proposal forms show evidence of student consultation and resulting changes suggesting deliberate steps towards future partnership. Programme Team meetings are to be introduced alongside the new programmes with the intention of

increasing student engagement with quality assurance, SSLC will continue for all students not registered on the new programmes and will be made use of to discuss the NCH Diploma.

2.46 The Students' Union consists of eight roles relating to the student experience. The Facilities Officer in particular has a role in student engagement as they regularly engage with the College with regards to facilities and resource management. The College has stated an intention to enhance student engagement by including the Union's President on the Academic Board for open agenda items, however, consideration of the current practice shows that insufficient emphasis is placed on partnership at all levels of the organisational structure. The review team therefore **recommends** the College ensures effective representation and regular monitoring of the collective student voice at all levels of the organisational structure.

2.47 Overall, the review team found that there are small weaknesses in the operation of student engagement systems and there is currently insufficient emphasis placed on partnership at all levels of the organisational structure. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.48 The College's assessment processes have recently been developed in accordance with the academic and regulatory framework of the SSU. The Memorandum of Agreement and sections of the Academic Handbook clearly identify the responsibilities of SSU to conduct the arrangements for extenuating circumstances, the recognition of prior learning and examination boards once the College has completed all of the associated procedures.

2.49 The Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Assessment Policy informs the College's assessment strategy and procedures. Appropriate policies are in place, including those relating to extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct and appeals. The use of generic grading criteria and grade marking is used to further ensure consistency and transparency in assessment practice. These arrangements allow the College to meet the Expectation in theory.

2.50 The review team found that there will be assessment boards conducted by the University from the 2015-16 academic year. The team heard how the staff are preparing to engage with the processes through the staff development plan and through the training provided through the Quality Network. A session of the latter had recently been conducted on examination boards and the shared responsibilities. This had also included the support staff to understand their role in the process.

2.51 As noted in section A3.2, College staff are adapting approaches to move away from an external examination based model towards College produced assessments. The team saw and heard evidence showing some progress towards a greater diversity in assessment through the inclusion of essays, dissertations and presentations; this was not the case with all modules. It is the responsibility of the Convenors to ensure, through their departmental meetings, that assessment and marking criteria are in alignment with the learning outcomes in the unit descriptors. Summative assessment will be peer reviewed and subject to external examiner feedback.

2.52 The Assessment Policy covers the procedures involved in the setting of summative assessments, marking and moderation. The development of the Assessment Practice document which includes: the procedure for developing assignment briefs and internal moderation; the process for peer review to agree briefs; the criteria for grading descriptors; and a useful guide covering the principles and practice of assessment. This supports the Assessment Policy and its annexes. At the time of the review the document remained in draft format as the College had been awaiting feedback from the inaugural Quality Assurance Network meeting. There were, therefore, no examples of the assessment briefs and internal moderation templates having been completed and implemented. The team heard that the next Network meeting would see Convenors reviewing assessment briefs with Link Tutors. Some of the Assessment Practice documents were in draft form and the procedures were yet to be made operational with the University. In conclusion, the review team **affirms** the development of the assessment practice document and its related policies for approval and implementation at the start of the new academic year.

2.53 The Staff Development programme which was planned to prepare and inform all staff of their responsibilities at various stages over an 18-month period includes aspects of assessment practice. This will augment the ongoing work within departments, led by the respective Convenor.

2.54 The review team found there is a clear commitment towards formative assessment in promoting students' learning. The team heard that the Convenors maintain oversight of sessional staff by requiring them to present their assessment briefings for approval. Regular feedback on assessment is delivered effectively to students through the academic tutorial model which provides weekly one-to-one tutorials, culminating in the termly Collections meetings. This systematic process contributes towards the areas of **good practice** identified in section B4. Students with whom the team met reinforced the views expressed in the student submission and confirmed that students see this as constructive, developmental and an integral part of the learning experience.

2.55 In conclusion, the review team considers that the College provides appropriate opportunities for students to achieve learning outcomes, particularly through the systematic approach towards ongoing formative feedback. The recruitment to the new degrees, however, will present new challenges and increased responsibilities to ensure the reliability and validity of assessment processes. Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate as the Assessment Practice procedures and processes have yet to be fully developed and embedded.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.56 For newly validated programmes, the Memorandum of Agreement and Academic Handbook set out mutual responsibilities regarding the appointment and responsibilities of external examiners. External examiners will be appointed by the University while the College will provide unit guides and samples of work for moderation. All assessments will be made available to the external examiner before release to students. Reports will be received by the University and communicated to the College for consideration at Programme Team meetings. External examiners for the new validated programmes will act as a key indicator of standards.

2.57 External examiners for the current ULIP programmes are appointed by the University of London and comment on the overall exam performance of ULIP's global candidates. Reference is made to these reports in annual programme review. External examiners are not appointed by the College and the College does not assess summative work or participate in assessment boards for ULIP. Taking into account the limited role of external examiners in current provision the College appears to meet the Expectation.

2.58 The review team tested the current approach and future plans by reviewing documentary evidence, including annual programme monitoring reports and validation documents.

2.59 The team found appropriate reference in the annual programme monitoring reports to the relevant ULIP external examiner report. Pertinent comments are identified and a programme response actioned to feed into curriculum delivery. For example, further practice at answering examination questions was identified for action in English to ensure discussion is centred on the relevant theoretical approach/framework. Convenors appear to make effective use of available reports within the constraint that they comment on overall performance and are not directly addressed to the College. History examiner reports are not routinely made available to the College. Students can access available reports via the VLE.

2.60 As arrangements for new programmes have yet to be implemented their effectiveness could not be tested. The review team is satisfied that the College is taking deliberate steps to establish appropriate policy and procedure regarding the use of external examiners. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B7 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.61 In addition to having its own approaches towards the monitoring and reviewing of programmes, the College is adapting its systems and processes to meet the requirements of SSU as described in section A3.3.

2.62 Following the approval of Academic Board, the College introduced a more formalised approach towards annual programme reporting in September 2014. This was in preparation for the increased responsibility for maintaining academic standards and assuring the quality of learning opportunities through its relationship with the University. Previously, programme review had been conducted informally within faculty team meetings and with each Convenor participating in Academic Board meetings. There is a Programme Review working group of Academic Board. The Staff-Student Liaison Committee provides a cross-disciplinary approach towards the ongoing review of the student experience. These arrangements allow the College to meet the Expectation.

2.63 The effectiveness of these practices and procedures was assessed through the examination of annual reporting documentation, minutes of the Academic Board, the Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings, and the SSU approval documentation. The team also met senior staff, academic and support staff, and students.

2.64 The College has adopted a peer-based approach for annual programme reporting which reflects its collegial cultural values. This is a three stage process moving from each individual Convenor writing a report, through a critical peer review and to the wider programme team meetings. The template promotes reflection on progression (including pass rates at each level of study), retention, external examiner feedback, student feedback (College surveys, unit surveys, SSLC) and resources. The peer review meeting is between two Convenors to enable a critical review of each other's report, facilitated by the QAO.

2.65 There is some variable practice in the level of detail and evaluative commentary within the annual programme reports and their action plans. There is constructive and evident discussion of issues, solutions and themes for the consideration of Academic Board; one report notes the Convenor having 'systematically applied additional action to issues'. The action plans, however, are sparsely populated with responsibilities, monitoring and review dates.

2.66 From 2015-16, the programme reports will be considered at Programme Team meetings, which will include student membership and link tutors. Although there are agreed terms of reference for programme teams, these have yet to meet as they form part of the agreement with SSU. There are no student representatives on the Academic Board; the College confirmed, however, that a student member will be nominated in the near future.

2.67 The report presented to the Academic Board summarising the themes and actions arising from the composite analysis of programme reports asked it to 'consider taking actions if necessary'. Although there were issues in the report concerning teaching and learning and resourcing, there was no tangible overall action plan to inform continued development nor the formal monitoring of agreed actions. The review team was informed that this would be addressed and would be considered systematically through Academic Board, but at the time

of the review this was yet to be agreed. Furthermore, the reports request examples of good practice for dissemination; there remain, therefore, missed opportunities to translate these into an enhancement-led plan. As a consequence the review team **recommends** that by September 2015 the College further develops the annual programme reporting process to ensure consistency and to monitor formally agreed actions.

2.68 Overall, there are appropriate mechanisms in place, although the team makes one recommendation to further develop and strengthen the annual programme reporting process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low as the one recommendation in this area relates to a need for a minor amendment to the process.

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

2.69 The College interacts with students regarding academic appeals and complaints with adherence to the awarding bodies' policies and procedures. Student's wishing to put forward an expression of dissatisfaction with regard to the College's policy and practice can access the College's Complaints Policy. Current students on a ULIP programme are directed to the University of London's Academic Appeals policies and procedures. The College has drafted an Academic Appeals Policy for students with a query and appeal against the decision of an Assessment Board with regards to proposed programmes validated by SSU.

2.70 Academic appeals for current students are assessed by ULIP and therefore academic appeals go directly to them; links to procedures are available on the ULIP VLE. The Academic Board undertake the first stage of the procedure for Academic Appeals with regards to the proposed new programmes, judging whether they are minor, therefore requiring action by the Academic Board or major and therefore requiring action by SSU.

2.71 The College's Complaints Policy sets out who can make a complaint and when. It comprises three stages for any issue or complaint, with clear timeframes and contact information, including a flowchart to increase clarity. In addition to this the complaints procedures for admissions are available and outlined in the College's Admissions Complaints Policy which shows a clear accessible procedure with clear time frames given, both procedures are published on the College website. The procedures meet the Expectation and reflect the Indicators of sound practice.

2.72 In order to test this expectation the team reviewed the Complaints and Academic Appeals Policies and procedures and discussed knowledge and accessibility of policies alongside the level of support available with students and staff.

2.73 Students are aware of how to access ULIP Academic Appeals procedures if required and support staff indicated a willingness to offer support where necessary for students wishing to follow these processes. The Academic Appeals Policy for the proposed programmes with SSU, agreed by Academic Board, clearly sets out the grounds for appeal, what is not covered by the Policy and an outline of the academic appeals process for SSU.

2.74 The robust one-to-one tutorial system, in particular the inclusion of a personal tutor who is not the student's lecturer, alongside accessible student support, ensures various opportunities for informal resolution of issues or complaints wherever possible. The College Complaints procedure is readily accessible on its website if required. Students said that any concerns or issues they had with the College were dealt with informally, promptly and appropriately and no formal complaints have been received to date. Staff and students provided examples of informal resolution of issues including changes to delivery modes.

2.75 The review team found the appeals and complaints procedures to be clear, accessible and effective, with various opportunities available to students that allow for early resolution. Support and guidance for students is accessible and students are able to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage. 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

2.76 The College does not deliver learning opportunities with other organisations as part of its academic programmes, therefore, this Expectation is not applicable.

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

2.77 The College offers no postgraduate provision, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.78 In reaching its positive 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.

2.79 All of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area have been met with two recommendations arising in total. For these expectations risk is judged to be low except in the case of Expectation 5 where the risk is considered moderate reflecting some weaknesses in the operation of the College's student engagement systems. The College's provision is currently in transition between offering tuition in preparation for entry to ULIP examinations and the delivery of degrees of Southampton Solent University. One of the recommendations and an affirmation reflect that procedures and processes have yet to be fully developed and embedded.

2.80 The review team highlights four instances of good practice within the judgement area, with learning and teaching being a particularly strong area, comprising: the termly review of individual student performance; the effective use of the tutorial system; the innovative opportunities for interdisciplinary learning offered by the NCH diploma; and the embedding of a research culture within the learning experience. Other factors contributing to the positive judgement include: the strong interdisciplinary ethos of the College and staff; support students receive in the admissions process; the level of access to staff and visiting lecturers afforded to students; and the support provided to students by the Student Support Coordinator and the Student Support Adviser.

2.81 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK Expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College recognises the importance of its responsibilities for public information by providing appropriate, accessible and accurate information for the public, prospective and current students, alumni, staff, partners and employers. The Academic Board has overall responsibility for the quality of information provided, with the College's Public Information Policy clearly stating lines of responsibility within the College.

3.2 Information is provided for the public and prospective students through the College website and Prospectus which contain relevant information to aid selection of a relevant course, such as explaining the academic environment, curriculum, course structure and admission information. Additional information for current ULIP students is available through the ULIP VLE, which contains course information and programme specifications, and the College VLE which contains teaching materials and links to various policies and procedures. For the proposed SSU programmes, students will be able to access relevant information through the College VLE including programme specifications and unit descriptors. The information made available meets the Expectation.

3.3 To test the application of the Expectation the review team reviewed the self-evaluation document, the student submission, the College website and the Prospectus alongside programmes specifications and unit descriptors. The team also discussed the information available with students and lines of responsibility with staff.

3.4 The Admission process is clearly outlined in the College Prospectus and the Admissions Policy is easily accessible on the College website. Prospective students are given robust information to help them select and apply for a programme. The College Prospectus contains relevant, useful information regarding environment, curriculum and available support in an accessible format. The Director of Marketing is responsible for the current prospectus information and will share responsibility for information about SSU programmes with the Director of Marketing.

3.5 Programme specifications are available for current students through the ULIP VLE and SSU programme specifications will be accessible on the College VLE. The College VLE also contains relevant information regarding policies and procedures. Responsibility for the accuracy of information placed on the College VLE lies with the Convenor, however, there are minimum expectations for standards and content which are monitored by the Student Support Coordinator. New policies and procedures relating to the SSU programmes will be made available on the College website. Students state the information available to them is relevant and fit for purpose.

3.6 All students undertake the NCH Diploma: a non-credit bearing award which provides professional development training. On completion they will receive a certificate and the purpose of the Diploma will be explained in any letters of recommendation or references supplied by the College. The name of the award and the potential for ambiguity leads the

review team to **recommend** the College ensure the status of the NCH diploma, as a non-credit bearing award, is made explicit to all stakeholders.

3.7 The review team concludes that the information available to the public, prospective and current students is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, therefore 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

3.8 In reaching its judgement concerning information about higher education provision, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.9 The review team found that information made available to the public, prospective and current students, and staff is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Responsibilities for the sign off of information are in place and arrangements regarding information for SSU programmes which are to be delivered by the College from the academic year 2015-16 have been agreed.

3.10 The review team makes one recommendation in this judgement area about the naming of the NDH Diploma, which is a non-academic award, and the potential for confusion that may result in naming the award a diploma. This was considered to be low risk.

3.11 Overall, the review team concludes that the quality of the information produced by the College about its provision **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College states that 'enhancement and continuous improvement in student learning' form the central core of its existence. The mission of the College aims to 'foster a collegial environment in which learning, debate and the sharing of ideas is central...in the quest for knowledge and intellectual enlargement'. The Teaching and Learning Strategy was presented as providing the inspiration for this approach. Students are encouraged to think across the boundaries of subject disciplines in partnership with the academic staff. The Master referred to the staff and students forming an 'intellectual family'.

4.2 The College has established close and productive relationships with visiting professors and visiting fellows to endorse its overarching philosophy of preparing graduates for rich and fulfilling lives.

4.3 The New College of the Humanities diploma runs alongside the main degree programmes and aims to produce 'fully rounded graduates who are highly employable'. This is composed of three elements: core modules of Applied Ethics, Logic and Critical Thinking and Science Literacy; contextual modules from other subject areas; and the Professional Programme.

4.4 The College identified two deliberate steps being taken to further enhancement of student learning opportunities. The first is the appointment of the Quality Assurance Officer to support academic staff in the production of programme documentation and to identify emerging themes or common actions to Academic Board from the recently introduced programme monitoring process. The College sees this as using quality assurance to identify opportunities for enhancement. The second step was the College-wide Teaching and Learning Colloquium introduced from 2015 to share best practice. These approaches enable the Expectation to be met in design.

4.5 The review team looked at the effectiveness of these approaches by examining the strategy documentation referred to above. The team also met the Master, senior staff, teaching and support staff, visiting fellows and students.

4.6 The College's deliberate staffing strategy is to attract and retain a core of research-active professionals. Students with whom the team met spoke enthusiastically of being able to benefit from the expertise of their teachers. The visiting professors provide an additional dimension to the learning opportunities which is welcomed by both students and staff.

4.7 The integration of initiatives at institutional level is developing through the Academic Board. The use of quality assurance processes to identify enhancement is under development. The summary report for annual programme monitoring for 2012-14 presented to Academic Board illustrates some move towards agreeing emerging themes and areas for coherent action. This provides the opportunity to promote an enhancement-led agenda. With respect to developing a more systematic approach towards planning and review, the team makes a recommendation under Expectation B8 to strengthen the consistency and monitoring of agreed actions arising from the annual programme reporting process. The team was informed that quality enhancement is a standing agenda item for the Academic Board and faculty meetings. The peer-review model which enables critique has recently been extended to annual reporting.

4.8 The review team heard that the whole College is 'predicated on the principles of enhancement' with staff who are both research active and with a 'love of teaching'. There is a collegial culture which is evident in everyday practice. Staff regularly observe sessions of peers in other disciplines to promote good practice. Annual programme reports invite comments relating to good practice to inform staff development plans and the Collegium agenda. A research club was established upon the principle of collaborative learning, out of which have developed two research clusters in Early Modern Studies and Ethics of Economics; faculty research officers maintain a shared database of information to contribute to reports for presentation to the Academic Board.

4.9 The cross-disciplinary ethos of the College sees staff and students as collaborative partners in learning and teaching which prepares students for thriving personally and professionally. There are discussion groups, for example in Philosophy, which facilitate the gathering of students and staff on a voluntary basis. Staff present their research to each other and to students in this context.

4.10 The review team found that the Professional Programme augments the student learning experience and is designed to develop the capabilities and behaviours to increase the employability of graduates. Particular emphasis is placed on entrepreneurship, innovation, team working and self-reliance. Additional validity and relevance is assured through the visiting fellows who deliver the majority of the sessions. These individuals are all practitioners and specialists in a range of commercial fields who work with the Convenor for the Professional Programme to refresh the focus of the session as markets change. Students with whom the team met spoke enthusiastically of having contact with inspirational people in this way and also of the 'My Beautiful Career' element of the programme (the opportunity for students to interact with senior industry people and to begin to form their own networks). Academic staff spoke of the benefits they derive through being in the audience of the visiting fellows' sessions. The contribution of the visiting fellows to enhancing the professional awareness and employability skills of the College's students is **good practice**.

4.11 The review team identified that partnership with students is not as advanced in relation to engagement in representational structures and quality assurance. The Staff-Student Liaison Committee provides a termly opportunity to capture feedback. As noted in section B5, at the time of the review there was no student representative on the Academic Board. The programme team meetings for the new degrees will include student membership but these have not yet met. The review team makes a recommendations in section B5 relating to student representation and student engagement which have the potential to identify further opportunities for enhancement.

4.12 Overall the review team concludes that the College has a strategic commitment to develop and enhance its provision. There is a collaborative culture which encourages cross disciplinary partnerships among its staff and students. The team identifies the contribution of visiting fellows to student learning as part of the Professional Programme as good practice. The review team concludes that the College meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.14 The Expectation about enhancement is met and risk is considered low in this area. One feature of good practice was identified and this was in relation to the contribution of visiting fellows in enhancing the professional awareness and employability skills of students. Other positive contributions to this area included the added dimension that visiting professors afforded to student learning, and the collegial culture and cross-disciplinary ethos of the College that promotes staff and students as collaborative partners in learning and teaching.

4.15 The review team finds that there are appropriate quality assurance arrangements in place to identify opportunities for enhancement and deliberate steps are being taken at College level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The review team makes two recommendations under the quality of learning opportunities, concerning the weakness in the student voice and the annual programme reporting process which should further strengthen the College's approach to enhancement.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 Employability is integral to the College's strategy to provide students with the capabilities that will enable them to thrive both professionally and personally after graduation. The College is keen to make the case for the value of an education in the humanities and social sciences. In so doing employability-related skills are delivered through the Professional Programme embedded within the compulsory NCH Diploma. Students also access personalised support for professional development through the Office for Professional Development, which acts as the College's careers advisory service.

5.2 The Professional Programme seeks to optimise student employment prospects by focusing on the needs of students as they start their careers. Programme content integrates team working, presentation, IT, and problem-solving among capabilities identified as important to employers. It is noteworthy that content is primarily delivered by professionals from the workplace who come in to the College as visiting fellows and that the programme is led by a senior member of the College who has had a long career in business. Visiting fellows typically hold senior appointments in technology, media and business.

5.3 Students attend a seminar programme through most of the three years and undertake two major projects at the end of their first and second years. The first year is generally concerned with basic competencies; the second year is themed around entrepreneurship, innovation and self-reliance; and the third year specifically deals with the capabilities likely to be most relevant for entry to employment. Aspects of the seminar programme support the development of wider academic study skills including research techniques, presentation and use of statistics and other software. Students complete written assignments and presentations, which alongside the project work contribute to the assessment of the NCH Diploma.

5.4 The end-of-year projects provide an interesting work-based learning opportunity. Students are required to take a brief from an organisation concerning a real problem that the organisation is currently trying to resolve. The students develop a hypothesis, discuss it with the organisation, then test it in a combination of desk research and primary customer research and finally present their findings to the organisation. Executives from the organisation review the students' work, and provide feedback which is used by the convenor in assessing the students' work.

5.5 The first students started the NCH Diploma in 2012 so will not graduate until summer 2015. It is therefore too early to assess and quantify the effectiveness of the Professional Programme on student employability and progression after graduation. However, the review team was impressed by the use of external expertise in delivering core content. It is evident that the College collects feedback from students and has made changes to aspects of delivery and staffing in response to this. The Professional Programme appears to provide a sound basis upon which to deliver its strategic aims.

5.6 A personalised approach to employability is evident, including the strand of the Professional Programme branded as 'My Beautiful Career' where speakers are invited to talk about their jobs to small groups of students who identified a sector as being particularly interesting to them. A considerable range of speakers have talked to students in this way.

5.7 Students meet the Director of Professional Development to obtain individual careers counselling and advice. The Director is also responsible for employer outreach and has successfully facilitated internship opportunities for students. Close to 100 internships were undertaken over the summer vacation in 2013 and 2014 and this is evidently a successful

aspect of the student experience, but not a formal component of the Professional Programme.

5.8 The College is able to deliver a personalised approach to support students' professional development and can call upon a body of visiting fellows who are clearly successful professionals and capable of delivering content that enthuses students. The approach is enhanced by the current low staff to student ratio and the College is aware of the resource implications as student numbers grow. The College plans to grow cohort size gradually, adding resource as necessary in order to maintain the low staff to student ratio and to provide support for an individualised approach to personal and professional development.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 29-32 of the [Higher Education Review \(Plus\) handbook](#)

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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