



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of the Cambridge Theological Federation

May 2017

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the Cambridge Theological Federation. The review took place from 3-5 May 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Clare Milsom
- David Howell
- Michael Rubin.

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

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

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

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)² and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- 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**.

- The academic governance system, which enables effective management of, and compliance with, the degree-awarding bodies' requirements (Expectation A2.1).
- The holistic and collegiate approach to student personal and professional development, which enhances the student experience (Expectation B4).
- The management of the personalised, student-focused placement and attachment system, which enhances student development and ministerial formation (Expectation B10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation**.

By June 2018:

- revise the student representation structure to facilitate a more student-centred approach to student engagement (Expectation B5).

Financial sustainability, management and governance

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

About the provider

The Cambridge Theological Federation (the Federation) is a provider of ecumenical theological education, primarily for those seeking ordination. It delivers a complex group of 14 programmes in association with three universities: the University of Cambridge, Durham University and Anglia Ruskin University. The Federation was founded in 1972 and is a partnership of nine theological and educational institutions (houses), with over 300 students from 25 different countries. Of the nine houses, seven have students studying on Federation awards.

The relationship with the University of Cambridge was established since the Federation's inception. The most recent institutional agreement with the University of Cambridge was signed in May 2015. The Federation currently delivers the Bachelor of Theology for Ministry (BTh) and a Diploma in Theology for Ministry (DTM) offered at level 6. As vocational programmes, the BTh and DTM are aligned with the external requirements of the churches and denominations who use the programmes for training.

The relationship with Anglia Ruskin University has been in place since 1995 and has involved a range of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, a number of which are being taught out. In 2014 the Ministry Division of the Church of England, which sponsors the Anglican ordinands trained by the Federation, required all Anglican theological training to be carried out through the Durham University Common Awards programme. The Federation continues to deliver Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology degrees with Anglia Ruskin University on a franchised basis.

In 2014 the Federation became one of the partners within the Durham University Common Awards suite of programmes, which brings together 25 theological and ministerial educational institutions that were previously validated by different universities. With the introduction of the Common Awards as a single pathway for ministerial and lay clerical training, the Federation has had to close admissions to the taught awards previously offered with Anglia Ruskin University. The Federation currently delivers a range of validated undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Theology, Ministry and Mission, awarded by Durham University. The Common Awards programmes align with the criteria established by both Durham University and the sponsoring churches and other professional bodies.

Since the last Review for Specific Course Designation in 2013, the Federation has developed a new Strategic Plan 2017-2022 in consultation with staff and students. The Federation has also completed refurbishment of, and relocation to, its own permanent premises on the campus of Westminster College, one of its constituent members.

The Federation has addressed all the recommendations made in the last report from the Review for Specific Course Designation and built on the good practice identified. The division of responsibilities between the Federation and its partner universities has been clarified where necessary. Staff development activities have facilitated a wider and deeper understanding of the Quality Code and its integration into all aspects of teaching and learning. Federation administrative staff responsible for handling admissions and assessments have been able to attend training sessions relating to their work. External examiners' reports are shared with students via the Federation intranet.

The Federation has made progress in its use of IT. All student work for assessment is submitted online via the Federation's virtual learning environment (VLE). Staff receive annual training and guidance on how to mark work online. Students are given instruction in how to submit assignments online during the annual induction sessions, and detailed guidance on this is also provided on the VLE. This is supplemented, as necessary, by

individual guidance from Directors of Studies and tutors within the member institutions. The Federation's IT Policy has been updated in light of its Prevent duty.

Students participate more fully in Federation committees. Information for students has been made clearer and is readily available on the VLE. An academic staff development group was established after the previous Review, and produces a termly programme of staff development activities.

The Federation has shared the good practice in best quality tutor handbooks across the member institutions. Individual institutional student handbooks and websites now consistently point to central Federation information, which ensures consistencies and up-to-date information.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The academic standards and quality of the programmes delivered by the Federation are ultimately the responsibility of the partner universities: the University of Cambridge, Durham University and Anglia Ruskin University. The Federation has a different collaborative relationship with each university, which is detailed in their respective agreements and which, in turn, outline the division of responsibilities.

1.2 The relationship with the University of Cambridge is operated through the Bachelor of Theology for Ministry (BTh) Management Committee, which is a joint committee with the University, accountable to the Faculty Board of the University's Faculty of Divinity. The BTh Management Committee proposes awards to the University of Cambridge, which meet FHEQ academic requirements, are aligned with the Qualifications and Credit Framework and take into account the Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies.

1.3 Within the Durham University Common Awards, a suite of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes has been approved by the University, which is responsible for the setting of academic standards. The Federation has a formal agreement to deliver these programmes. The Common Awards are owned by the Ministry Division of the Church of England (CofE). They were developed in partnership with the Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed churches. The CofE Ministry Division has representatives on the Durham University Common Awards Management Board, which oversees the management of the provision.

1.4 The Federation delivers Anglia Ruskin University research programmes through a franchise agreement where the standards and quality are the responsibility of the University. There is a formal agreement with the University for the Professional Doctorate, and for the MPhil and PhD programmes offered.

1.5 Programme specifications developed by the awarding bodies for all of the programmes delivered by the Federation refer to the Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies. The Common Awards also refer to a 'context-based' route (work with young people and children) but make no mention of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Youth and Community Work. The Federation's internal processes and the overall responsibilities of the awarding bodies would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.6 In testing the Expectation, the review team examined documentary evidence relating to the Federation's relationship with the awarding bodies, including formal arrangements with the awarding bodies and management and academic governance. The review team also met with senior, academic and support staff, together with students from across a range of programmes and delivery modes.

1.7 The Federation has consulted widely with staff and students and agreed a Strategic Plan for the years 2017-2022, through which it is seeking to ensure a high quality student experience across the range of their learning activities, operate as a sustainable business and enhance institutional collaboration. The Federation acknowledges that one of the challenges is the difference between the houses, recognising the reality that member institutions are engaged in different kinds of work, and it is working to ensure fairness between these non-comparable institutions.

1.8 The Federation's Strategic Plan for 2017-2022 has a clear focus on the maintenance of threshold academic standards. The Federation has recently appointed a Director of Taught Programmes with primary responsibility for quality assurance of the programmes. The Director acts in an advisory and negotiating capacity between the constituent houses of the Federation.

1.9 There is clear evidence of a strong commitment to the Federation as an umbrella organisation by all of the constituent members, which is expressed by teaching staff, students and professional support staff. In turn, the Federation is committed to the academic agreements with the awarding bodies. Staff are using the Quality Code in the development of programmes and delivery principles and processes.

1.10 The Federation has appropriate structures and processes in place to ensure that it maintains the academic standards set by the awarding bodies. 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 (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

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

Findings

1.11 The academic frameworks and regulations governing the programmes being taught are the responsibility of the respective awarding bodies, as set out in the responsibilities checklists. These responsibilities are also found in part in the Federation's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook 2016-2017.

1.12 The Federation has a clearly defined academic governance and management structure within which it operates and implements the awarding bodies' academic frameworks and regulations. It includes the Federation's Governing Council, Management Committee, Academic Committee, Resources Committee, and Worship and Community Life Committee. Every house is involved in the committees of the Federation and there is a strong collegiate ethos. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13 In considering the Expectation the review team examined documentation including committee structures, policies and practices, together with the awarding body responsibility checklists, and met with senior staff, academic staff and students.

1.14 The University of Cambridge awards, which are subject to the University's regulations, are managed through the joint BTh Management Committee which has oversight and responsibility for quality assurance of the awards. Similarly, the Anglia Ruskin research degree programmes are governed by the University's Research Degree Regulations. Management and delivery of the Professional Doctorate programme is overseen by the University's Programme Director, who is also the Director of Postgraduate Research Programmes for the Federation and who is based in the Federation's offices in Cambridge. The Durham University Common Awards are managed through the Common Awards Management Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Committee.

1.15 In order to assure the quality of its teaching and learning and enhance its provision, the Federation has agreed a Teaching and Learning Strategy, which is overseen by the newly created Teaching and Learning Core Team. The newly appointed Director of Taught Programmes has oversight of the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and reports both to the Teaching and Learning Core Team and to the Federation Academic Committee.

1.16 Each Federation house appoints a member of its staff, usually the Director of Studies, to the Federation Academic Committee. This committee is responsible for the quality assurance of the Federation's academic portfolio, the development and implementation of the Federation's Teaching and Learning Strategy, scrutinising at award level any new programme proposals that have been approved for development by the Management Committee, and managing the Federation's quality processes.

1.17 All nine houses are equally involved in the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy and actively participate in the deliberations of the Federation Academic Committee. They also play a significant part in the governance and management of the Federation. The staff involved in the oversight of teaching and learning are responsible for the timetable and teaching allocations, review of module guides and marking allocations,

and review of student evaluation and feedback and staff development. There are clearly articulated responsibilities and lines of reporting for all committees.

1.18 Students are not simply taught together but have the opportunity to engage in Federation-wide worship and retreats and with a wide range of people, beliefs and theologies. Staff and students understand and affirm their identities within their house and within the Federation. Staff referred to a strong culture of staff collaboration across houses and a sense of academic community.

1.19 The management of teaching staff, especially covering the teaching of key members of staff when away, adds to the strong sense of collegiate working across the Federation. Succession planning is underway to cover the retirement of key members of staff and there is great clarity around the academic governance and the alignment of Federation policies and procedures with the degree-awarding bodies' frameworks and regulations, which govern the award of academic credit and qualifications. The review team considers the academic governance system, which enables effective management of, and compliance with, the degree-awarding bodies' requirements, to be an example of **good practice**.

1.20 The Federation has a deliberative structure that generates a strong sense of ownership in the governance and management of a multi-faceted delivery. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.21 The definitive records of programmes delivered by the Federation are developed and maintained by the awarding bodies. The responsibility for maintaining the definitive records is outlined in the relevant provider checklist. Programme specifications for all programmes are published on the relevant VLE. The Federation is responsible for maintaining accurate records of its programme delivery. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.22 The review team examined the programme specifications and programme delivery records, including information published online. The team also held meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

1.23 The programme specifications developed and maintained by the awarding bodies meet the expectations of the Quality Code. Specifications for the Durham University programmes are made available to students on the Federation VLE, with each programme having its own page. For programmes awarded by the University of Cambridge, programme specifications are accessible via the Cambridge University VLE. Abstracts of the programme specifications are also made available to applicants via the Federation website and individual house websites.

1.24 The Registrar's Office is responsible for overall maintenance of accurate records of programme delivery, and the Director of Taught programmes has responsibility for ensuring that module guides are up to date. The records and module guides are accurate and up to date, suggesting that the processes work effectively.

1.25 While the awarding bodies retain responsibility for maintaining definitive records, the provider's own internal processes regarding maintaining accurate records of programme delivery are satisfactory. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.26 The approval of taught programmes and research degrees delivered by the Federation is the responsibility of the degree-awarding bodies. The institutions' quality processes ensure that UK threshold academic standards are set at an appropriate level. The Federation is responsible for maintaining academic standards and works within the awarding bodies' academic frameworks and regulations.

1.27 The approval process for the Common Awards in Theology, Ministry and Mission is set out in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. Processes for the approval of awards with the University of Cambridge are defined in the partner institution agreement. For Anglia Ruskin University provision, the approval process is set out in the Senate Code of Practice on Curriculum Approval and Review.

1.28 The Federation works closely with each degree-awarding body to facilitate taught programme approval through the governance structure, which includes the Common Awards Management Committee and the BTh Committee of Management. There is a well-defined, four-stage process for the internal approval of new programmes which requires reference to external benchmarks and standards. External examiners who have relevant subject knowledge are employed by the validating universities to ensure that the academic standards of the provisions are maintained. The processes and procedures for ensuring that programme approval meets the required academic standards would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.29 To test the Expectation, the review team considered a range of documents including curriculum development forms, external examiner reports and relevant committee meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with academic and senior staff.

1.30 Academic teams from the various houses of the Federation are involved in the design and development of programmes. The Director of Taught Programmes and the Director of Postgraduate Research Programmes provide oversight of curriculum development at Federation level. Programmes are designed with reference to the Federation's Teaching and Learning Strategy, the requirements of professional accreditation (including formational criteria of sponsoring churches) and the academic framework and regulations of the degree-awarding bodies.

1.31 The awarding bodies' processes for the design, development and approval of new programmes are rigorous. Federation staff fully understand these processes and adhere to them. Despite the complexity of working with three degree-awarding bodies, staff are able to articulate clearly the relevant awarding body approval processes and how they articulate with internal curriculum design and development procedures.

1.32 The process for changes to the Durham Common Awards programmes and module delivery are detailed in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The Federation's Common Awards Management Committee agrees proposals, which go through the Management Committee and the Academic Committee and are then submitted

by the Federation to Durham University's Common Awards Management Board.

1.33 The Federation has a clear understanding of the academic frameworks and regulations of the degree-awarding bodies and is fulfilling its responsibilities for programme approval as outlined in the three partner institution agreements. The review team concludes that Expectation 3.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.34 The responsibility for ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes rests with the degree-awarding bodies as set out in the partner institution agreements. The Federation is responsible for ensuring that learning outcomes are met through appropriate, relevant, valid and reliable assessment, and that each module or paper provides clearly set-out learning outcomes and assessment expectations. Academic staff across the Federation work together in subject areas to ensure that formative and summative assessment is appropriate and rigorous.

1.35 For the Common Awards, the Federation sets the assessment for each module from a list of assessment options and marking is carried out in accordance with the degree-awarding body's assessment criteria. For the Cambridge University programmes, the Faculty Board of the degree-awarding body sets the assessments annually on the recommendation of the programme management committee. Anglia Ruskin University sets the assessments for the Professional Doctorate programme. The external examiners for all taught programmes are able to provide an objective view on whether assessment appropriately demonstrates achievement of the specified learning outcomes.

1.36 The conduct of assessment and moderation is outlined in the Quality Assurance Handbook. The assessment procedures align with the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies. The Federation follows the assessment policy and approaches laid out by each awarding body, and this would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.37 The review team tested the Expectation by examining a range of assessment-related documentation including external examiners' reports, assessment regulations and curriculum development forms. The team also discussed assessment procedures with senior and academic staff and students.

1.38 The Federation's assessment arrangements demonstrate effectively the achievement of learning outcomes. Student and staff handbooks provide appropriate guidance. Information on assessment is also provided through the relevant VLE. The Federation works closely with external examiners in the design of assessment. Staff were able to describe clearly the assessment processes and arrangements for each degree-awarding body, and students confirmed that they were aware of assessment arrangements, including internal and external marking and moderation procedures.

1.39 The Federation manages its responsibility for the award of credit and qualifications effectively. The achievement of learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment. Expectation 3.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.40 The Federation's responsibility in the academic oversight of programmes is shared with the degree-awarding bodies. The Federation follows the rules laid down by the University of Cambridge in its Statutes and Ordinances, and by the University of Durham programme regulations, to ensure that standards are maintained.

1.41 Every six years the Ministry Division of the Church of England conducts a Periodic External Review (PER) for the Durham University Common Awards. This is a joint activity with the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union. The PER requires theological educational institutes such as the Federation to carry out an annual self-evaluation process. The Federation carries out the same annual self-evaluation for its programmes with the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University.

1.42 For University of Durham awards, the Federation submits an annual self-evaluation form to the degree-awarding body and the Ministry Division and reports to the Durham Common Awards Management Board through its Common Awards Management Committee. The Federation's Academic Committee receives the minutes of the Common Awards Management Committee. For the Cambridge University programmes, the Federation reports to the University's Faculty Board through the BTh Management Committee.

1.43 Annual monitoring for the Anglia Ruskin doctoral programmes is undertaken in accordance with the University's Research Degree Regulations. This process is considered to be shared, as there is a Federation representative on the degree-awarding body's research degrees subcommittee. The Federation's adherence to the degree-awarding bodies' regulations for programme monitoring and review, and the internal processes that support this activity, would enable Expectation 3.3 to be met.

1.44 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with staff and considered a range of documentation including responsibilities checklists, annual self-evaluation reports and relevant committee minutes.

1.45 The processes for annual monitoring are embedded within the Federation in line with the actions identified in the 2016 action plan. The annual self-evaluation that the Federation produces adheres to the degree-awarding bodies' requirements and aligns with the expectations of the Quality Code. Student feedback informs module evaluations, which underpin the annual programme review methodology. The Federation also analyses a range of data as part of the process, including progression and achievement data, considers external examiners reports, and develops action plans following an annual review of programmes meeting. Oversight of the annual programme review process is effective, with actions reviewed at Federation level through the Academic Committee.

1.46 In meetings, staff demonstrated a clear understanding of the process for annual programme review and the separation of the responsibilities between the Federation and the relevant degree-awarding body. While students are not directly involved in the programme monitoring process they reported that they are able to provide comments through the

committee structure.

1.47 Overall, the Federation manages its responsibilities for programme monitoring and review in accordance with the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies and within its own academic governance structures. The process addresses the achievement and maintenance of standards. Annual monitoring and review processes are implemented effectively at the Federation. Staff are aware of the processes and the relationship of these to the degree-awarding bodies. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.48 The degree-awarding bodies ensure that external and independent expertise is used at key stages in the setting and maintaining academic standards. The awarding bodies ensure that programme approval panels include independent external subject experts. They also appoint appropriately qualified external examiners to the Federation's programmes. In addition, the Federation makes use of independent external expertise in its academic governance and through working with placement providers. The arrangements in place would allow this Expectation to be met.

1.49 The review team examined documentation including relevant reports, committee minutes and practices and met with senior staff, academic staff and placement and attachment supervisors.

1.50 The Federation makes appropriate use of independent and external expertise. There are clear processes for the consideration of external examiner reports. In addition, the Federation engages with external expertise by appointing independent members onto the Federation's Governing Council. Church employment needs also feed into the programmes through external membership on the Governing Councils of the houses. In turn, the Principals of each house feed back to the Federation Governing Council and the Federation Management Committee their own church's requirements.

1.51 Due to the vocational nature of the provision, there is a strong dependence upon placements and attachments for student learning and ministerial formation, and external supervisors are able to comment upon the suitability of the training provision. In addition, the Ministry Division of the Church of England requires the Federation to appoint a quality advisor external to the Federation who acts as a critical friend, facilitating the review process, prioritising actions and helping to shape the annual self-evaluation (ASE) report.

1.52 The Federation uses independent and external expertise appropriately to maintain academic standards and the quality of its provision. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.53 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. In Expectation A2.1 the academic governance system, which enables effective management of, and compliance with, the degree-awarding bodies' requirements, was identified as good practice. There are no affirmations in this judgement area.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The degree-awarding bodies have overall responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes delivered at the Federation. The Federation manages the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of the provision through internal processes aligned with the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies and the Quality Code. The awarding bodies' programme approval processes make explicit reference to external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ.

2.2 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook sets out the process for design, development and approval of taught programmes delivered at the Federation. The Federation operates a four-stage internal programme approval process, which ensures that the programmes are aligned with the Federation's Teaching and Learning Strategy and adhere to the regulations of the degree-awarding bodies. The Academic Committee reviews programme approval documentation, which includes a curriculum development proposal as well as programme and module specifications, and makes recommendations to the Federation Management Committee as to whether new developments should progress. Following approval, the proposal is referred to the relevant degree-awarding body for consideration. For research degree programmes, development and approval is located within Anglia Ruskin University and its systems. The Professional Doctorate was successfully revalidated in May 2017.

2.3 Modifications to taught programmes are proposed by the Federation and approved by the relevant degree-awarding body. In proposing any amendments or new pathways for Durham University programmes, the Federation uses University's programme approval framework to guide its internal processes and seeks alignment with the requirements of external bodies. The arrangements for the design, development and approval of programmes would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team tested this Expectation through meetings with staff, students and placement providers, and consideration of documentation including the Federation's programme approval processes and approval documentation.

2.5 Overall, the review team found that the arrangements for programme design, development and approval are effective in practice. Staff have a very clear understanding of the processes and of how the strategic direction of the Federation is aligned with the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies. Meetings with staff demonstrated clear ownership of the curriculum within the university academic frameworks and the collegial house structure. Students are currently not involved in course development beyond the provision of feedback. There is an opportunity within the Federation for formal student participation within course design process. Placement and attachment providers contribute to course design through the annual placement review process.

2.6 The Federation has effective arrangements to ensure adherence to the degree-awarding bodies' procedures for programme design and development and approval. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.7 The Federation's recruitment, selection and admissions procedures are governed by the policies of the awarding bodies. The admissions policy for programmes awarded through Durham University was developed in line with the University's regulations and approved by the degree-awarding body. The policy sets out the division of responsibilities within the provider, including who is responsible for communication with applicants. The procedure for complaints and appeals with regards to admissions is also articulated. The admissions policy can be found in the Federations' Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.

2.8 The principles for admissions to programmes awarded through Cambridge University are outlined in the partner institution agreement, including the different responsibilities of the two institutions. This is complemented by the Cambridge University admissions policy and the Federation policy on admission to University of Cambridge programmes in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. There are differences in the process depending on whether an applicant is independent (non-ordained) or ordained.

2.9 The admissions policy for the provision awarded through Anglia Ruskin University is detailed in the Senate Code of Practice on Admissions. Admissions regulations are set out in the University's Research Degree Regulations. The Federation has adopted these regulations to govern admissions onto its research degree programmes.

2.10 Entry requirements for all programmes are set by the relevant awarding body and vocational requirements exist for ordinands, but vary depending on the church denomination and house to which students apply. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.11 The review team examined admissions policies and procedures. The team also accessed application information provided to students online through the website and held meetings with students and academic and professional support staff.

2.12 The application process for different types of applicants (ordinands, lay reader trainees, independent applicants, professional doctoral students or MPhil/PhD candidates) is set out clearly through the Federation's website as well as through an internal flow-chart to guide staff. While there are numerous combinations of awarding body and student type, students are clear, from application, about what type of programme they will be studying on and who the awarding body is.

2.13 The application forms for the different type of programmes are made available online. The forms contain the required application information, including questions on additional learning support required and recognition of prior learning (RPL). RPL for undergraduate programmes is coordinated by the Assistant Registrar and the Director of Taught Programmes. For Durham University provision, the Federation makes a request to the awarding body for approval. There is an RPL checklist to ensure clarity of process.

There is no RPL for University of Cambridge provision, as the University of Cambridge does not provide for accreditation of prior learning.

2.14 The Federation provides a good level of training to all relevant staff undertaking admissions activities for the Durham University awards. There are also opportunities for staff admitting students to the University of Cambridge provision to undergo university admissions training.

2.15 Students have the opportunity to engage in a 'taster module' prior to applying for admission to observe and participate in teaching sessions. It is currently aimed at non-standard applicants to the postgraduate taught programmes, allowing the Federation to ascertain whether they could cope academically at that level. If students pass the module they may enrol onto the master's programme. The Federation plans to extend this opportunity to all undergraduate programmes.

2.16 Admissions policies are reviewed and updated annually, unless minor amendments are required during the year. The Academic Committee is ultimately responsible for ensuring all policies are current and up to date. The Common Awards Management Committee reviews relevant admissions procedures for the Durham University provision. The BTh Management Committee conducts a review of policies and procedures for University of Cambridge provision, and research degree admissions policies are reviewed by ARU with no Federation involvement.

2.17 Students are broadly positive about the admissions process, including students studying via distance learning who found the process to be straightforward. Research students reported that there was sufficient information and support, with the whole admissions process being smooth. Distance research students are required to undertake a formal interview, which they found to be a very positive experience. Independent students on taught programmes may also undertake an interview, if the house requires this. There was one example of a student who attended what they thought to be an open day, but unexpectedly had an interview. However, the review team is confident that this was an isolated case and that the systems and structures that underpin the Federation's admissions are robust.

2.18 All applications are logged. Applications to Durham University programmes are administered by the Assistant Registrar, with the Director of Taught Programmes having oversight of the whole admissions process. University of Cambridge applications are considered by the BTh Management Committee for recommendation to the University, which has final decision-making powers. Admissions tutors at houses use a common system and paperwork which outlines the admissions process clearly.

2.19 Admissions Tutors and Directors of Studies in each house are responsible for providing information on the admissions process to postgraduate study for internal applicants. Some students were not entirely satisfied with the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study within the Federation, with the admissions process to postgraduate study proving to be more complicated than initially suggested. The review team are confident that the issues were of an isolated nature.

2.20 Admissions appeals are covered in the procedures for Durham University provision. The Federation is in the process of developing procedures for admissions appeals covering University of Cambridge programmes, as the awarding body's admissions procedure currently does not cover this.

2.21 Overall, the review team concludes that the Federation's 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 the Federation in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.22 The Teaching and Learning Strategy outlines how teaching is to be delivered. The Federation delivers a complex range of programmes. All programmes are delivered through lectures and seminars at the various houses. University of Cambridge programmes are also delivered in the Divinity Faculty of the University.

2.23 Regular academic staff development sessions provide opportunities to refine approaches to teaching and learning. The Federation has a strong system in place for peer observation of teaching, which enables tutors to share best practice and to learn from each other. The processes and procedures for teaching and learning would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.24 In considering this Expectation the review team examined teaching and learning strategies and processes and held meetings with senior and academic staff and students from a range of programmes and study modes.

2.25 The Teaching and Learning Strategy, available on the Federation's VLE, contains a set of priorities that are reviewed annually by the Teaching and Learning Core Team, which then makes recommendations to the Federation Academic Committee. Relevant minutes confirm the systematic review of priorities.

2.26 All teaching is delivered by staff from the various houses. There is a fair amount of team teaching. The Federation operates a system of module evaluations to enable students to respond to the learning experience. Student module evaluations are generally positive and demonstrate good levels of satisfaction with the quality of delivery. Students who met the review team also expressed satisfaction with the quality of teaching and support for their learning. A number of key points to enhance student learning have been derived from student evaluations and are being disseminated across the Federation houses and incorporated into the staff development programme. The Federation is responsive to student feedback on the quality of teaching. For example, where teaching has been inadequate, module tutors have been replaced.

2.27 The Federation also maintains appropriate oversight of teaching quality through the peer observation scheme, which emphasises the discussion of good teaching practice. Peer observation of teaching is in place for all teaching staff. Academic staff appraisals, which are conducted in the houses by the Principals, include reflection on feedback on teaching from students and peer observations. Learning from the peer observations feeds into the staff development programme's good practice sessions.

2.28 There is emerging evidence of creative ways in which students can demonstrate that they have met learning outcomes. For example, there is to be a day event and exhibition showcasing artwork that is a part of the submission for the Bachelor of Theology pastoral portfolio. Through this event the Federation plans to increase the profile of the unique combination of theological sensibility with creativity, and with a view to encouraging further creativity in assessment across all the awards taught by the Federation.

2.29 The development of teaching staff is supported through targeted in-house staff development. The Federation has a Staff Development Policy. An Academic Staff Development Group has been established, which produces a termly programme of staff development activities that are routinely well attended and seen to be a significant part of teaching responsibilities across the Federation. Staff development sessions conducted during the academic year 2016-17 address some of the issues identified in external examiner and annual self-evaluation reports. Staff teaching on the University of Cambridge degrees can also engage in the University's staff development programme.

2.30 Not all staff hold a qualification for teaching within the higher education sector, nor are they required to do so. However, many of the staff are members or fellows of the Higher Education Academy and have taken advantage of development opportunities offered by the validating universities.

2.31 In recent years the Federation has articulated a greater role for research in its strategic planning, with research-informed teaching featuring more prominently in its approaches to teaching. Staff from all of the houses are involved in research activities with the majority also publishing.

2.32 The review team found that the Federation works extensively with staff and students to articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.33 The Federation has a Learning Support Committee, which oversees the provision of support services for students across the Federation and reports to the Academic Committee. Individual student support is primarily through a Federation house, with a Director of Studies overseeing academic support arrangements and a Director of Pastoral Studies responsible for placement and attachment support. All students also have a named personal tutor. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.34 In considering this Expectation the review team examined student support policies and processes and met with academic and professional support staff, placement providers and students.

2.35 Federation houses run induction programmes for new students, which build upon interviews and admissions correspondence in order to maximise the opportunities for students to settle well into their new contexts and programmes of study. An introductory session of learning support for the whole Federation also forms part of the induction.

2.36 There is a strong culture of learning and support as students belong to and live in the houses, where they access academic and pastoral support, share meals with staff, worship together and develop a strong sense of community. Each house has a Director of Studies who meets regularly with individual students to plan their programmes and to ensure that appropriate academic support is in place. In some houses there are meetings of tutor groups, and individual tutorials. In addition, regular study skills sessions are offered to all students in the individual houses. Study skills and learning support resources are available to all the students on the VLE.

2.37 Targeted learning support is provided in placements and attachments where students work alongside line managers in ministry settings. Each house has a Director of Pastoral Studies who is actively involved in supporting students to select a placement that will help them to develop personally, as well as enable them to demonstrate appropriate pastoral learning and ministerial formation. Students are satisfied with the quality of academic and pastoral support available.

2.38 Students have the opportunity to declare a diagnosed or suspected specific learning difficulty (SpLD) on the application form. Students with a SpLD on Durham University programmes are supported by external non-medical help workers. Some students did express concerns over the extended time taken to diagnose and respond to learning disabilities. Students on the University of Cambridge awards are able to access specialist support services through the University of Cambridge.

2.39 There is evidence of a genuine care for students. Student support is often personal and tailored to students' needs. Academic and pastoral support systems are well integrated. They are complemented by living and learning arrangements that foster a strong learning community. The review team considers the holistic and collegiate approach to student personal and professional development, which enhances the student experience, to be **good practice**.

2.40 Students can access the libraries in all of the Federation's houses. Students on the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin programmes also have access to the

Universities' libraries and electronic resources. Students on the Durham University programmes reported a lack of learning resources. The Federation acknowledged the need to improve the library provision and has recently appointed a Learning Resource Manager who has organised a strategic review of learning resources, resulting in a series of recommendations. There is a default move to e-journals this year and e-books in the next academic year.

2.41 The Federation is also embarking on the redevelopment and expansion of its physical estate with a view to developing a modern environment for student learning, engagement and collaboration, and to build on and enhance its capacity for ecumenicity, research, and theological and educational encounter.

2.42 Overall, the Federation enables the development of the academic, personal and professional potential of the students, and facilitates their ministerial formation. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.43 Students are represented on most Federation committees, including the Federation Governing Council, the Federation Management Committee, the Academic Committee and its subcommittees, such as the Common Awards Management Committee and the BTh Management Committee.

2.44 There is a Student Forum which acts as the main representative body for students, and which is one of the channels through which students can provide feedback to the Federation. Each member body can elect up to five students to the Forum, and students who sit on College-wide committees are automatic members. The Forum chair acts as the student representative on the Federation's Governing Council. The Federation has established internal policies and procedures for student engagement, which would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.45 The review team examined terms of reference and minutes of relevant committees and held meetings with both staff and students, including student representatives, the Lead Student Representative and those who do not have a formal student representative position.

2.46 Information on student representation is provided to students in the student handbook. The Student Forum is responsible for student representative elections. The overall perception among students is that the Federation listens to student feedback from committees. Student representatives have seen changes made in response to student feedback. Student Forum minutes show good evidence of the feedback loop being closed, with Federation-wide committee representatives feeding back to the Forum. Informal meetings of student representatives with the Registrar show a good level of access for student representatives.

2.47 Student representation on the Federation Management Committees provides an opportunity for representatives to collect issues beforehand, which are subsequently addressed with a formal response and timescales for implementation or reasons why changes cannot be made. The minutes of committee meetings are made available to the student body on the VLE.

2.48 The Common Awards Management Committee, of which students are members, creates a useful student feedback action plan for Durham University provision. The plan is posted on the VLE and shows good closing of the feedback loop. Oversight of the action plan is through the committee, but primarily by the Director of Taught Programmes as chair of the committee. No such document exists for provision awarded by the two other awarding bodies.

2.49 Currently, there is no training for student representatives on Durham University programmes, only a private handover from the previous role holder. The Federation is planning on consulting with the student body on whether this would be a helpful addition. Student representatives on programmes from the other two universities can access training via the awarding bodies.

2.50 Distance learning students are aware of their student representatives and receive a high quality annual report of activities. They also have an opportunity to provide feedback via campus student representatives, showing a good level of student engagement among a

hard-to-reach demographic.

2.51 There are a number of examples that evidence student engagement across the different houses, although there is considerable variation in practice. Students are able to field many issues in-house, with house student representatives acting as a first point of call for most. Houses also host end-of-year feedback sessions with their Director of Studies, the notes of which are considered at the annual review of programmes. While students are pleased that these meetings exist, it is suggested that the timing, at the end of the year, limits the usefulness of the meeting. In addition, houses take different approaches, for instance in one house the meeting is aimed more at welcoming new cohorts than for receiving feedback from existing students.

2.52 Students are required to fill out an end-of-module evaluation survey, with the feedback used to inform enhancement. There is also an annual student evaluation questionnaire that identifies good practice and areas for improvement. The Director of Taught Programmes produces a summation evaluation document, which is discussed by the Learning and Teaching Core Team and considered through the committee structure with student representatives. Examples of changes made in response to student feedback include substantial changes to the content of a master's-level core module as well as changes to the delivery pattern and marking rubric for other modules.

2.53 The Student Forum primarily acts as a channel to discuss student community matters between houses, social activities and other aspects of student life. There is an opportunity to raise academic matters if necessary, but this is not generally considered a function of the Forum. The Forum does, however, assist in bringing about a greater awareness of the Federation as an institution among the student body. Student feedback on non-academic matters shared through the Forum is brought to the relevant committees and progress is reported back. Student Forum representatives subsequently disseminate this information in their houses. Feedback suggests that the Student Forum as an organisation is working effectively, with the vast majority of students stating that they felt well represented by it.

2.54 Students have had involvement in the development of the Strategic Plan 2017-2022, through both consultation and a student member on the strategic planning group. Student involvement in module and programme design is limited to feedback through participation of student representatives in the programme management committees.

2.55 The current system of student engagement is largely dependent on student participation in deliberative committees. While it is true that there are plenty of opportunities for students to participate in the business of committees, student representatives find it challenging to attend regularly due to the number of committees, the time commitment of being a representative, clashes with teaching and a lack of sufficiently advanced notice of meetings. Indeed, student feedback suggests that because of this, there is a breakdown in student engagement, with only a minority of respondents feeling adequately consulted about proposals to enhance learning opportunities. Student feedback also suggests that the Federation could benefit from expectation management, for example through a clearly articulated student charter. Discussions to introduce a student charter are ongoing with students, and there is a version of it for the research degree provision in the form of a draft online learning agreement.

2.56 Overall, formal opportunities for student engagement are limited. Opportunities often appear as add-ons to existing structures, rather than bespoke student engagement channels. While student representation on committees is an important principle, and a key way of ensuring high level student engagement, the Federation lacks bespoke methods of student engagement, and systems designed around students and based on the principle of

students as equal partners in their educational experience. This is particularly important given the issues with sourcing students to attend committees regularly. The review team therefore **recommends** that the Federation reviews the student representation structure to facilitate a more student-centred approach to student engagement.

2.57 The Federation takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. However, the current student engagement system is not fully effective. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met, with a moderate risk.

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

2.58 The Federation conducts assessment and moderation in line with the assessment policies and procedures of the degree-awarding bodies. For the Durham University Common Awards assessment, tasks are selected from a set of University-approved options for each module. For programmes validated by Cambridge University, the BTh Management Committee makes recommendations for approval of assessments to the University's Faculty Board. The assessment process is reviewed annually by the University of Cambridge through the examiners' meeting and the BTh Management Committee. Assessments for the taught components of the Professional Doctorate are set by Anglia Ruskin University in accordance with the Senate Code of Practice on Curriculum Development.

2.59 Marking and moderation is conducted in accordance within the regulations and procedures of the relevant degree-awarding body. The process is detailed in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. Assessment criteria are provided by the degree-awarding bodies. The Federation manages assessment for the Common Awards within the degree-awarding body's core regulations. The moderation process for the Professional Doctorate is a two-stage process, with the Federation responsible for the initial marking only. External examiners comment on and confirm the standards of all awards delivered by the Federation in their annual reports. There is a clear policy for the management of assessment irregularities.

2.60 The Student Feedback Policy details the timescales and the delivery of the feedback on assessed work via the Federation's VLE. Assessment information is included with the student handbooks. During 2015-16, the Federation moved to a fully electronic marking system for the Common Awards, with the external examiner confirming successful transition.

2.61 The requirements for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) are aligned with the policy of the degree-awarding bodies. For the Common Awards, a maximum of one third of credit is permitted through RPL. Credit is awarded through the demonstration of the achievement of learning outcomes. RPL is restricted to programmes validated by the University of Cambridge to exceptions relating to biblical language. The Federation's internal processes and its compliance with the regulations and procedures of the degree-awarding bodies would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.62 The review team tested this Expectation through consideration of the Federation's practices and procedures, through the scrutiny of a range of documentation including external examiner's reports, marking documentation, student and staff handbooks, programme annual self-evaluation, module evaluations and assessment reports. In addition, the team met with students and senior and academic staff.

2.63 External examiners confirm that assessment is thorough and rigorous. The external examiner report for the University of Cambridge programmes identified some inconsistencies in the marking process. However, in meetings with the review team staff demonstrated a clear understanding the marking and moderation processes of the degree-awarding bodies

and the process is clearly defined.

2.64 The Federation is encouraging staff to spend time in teaching sessions detailing the assignments' requirements. All student work for assessment is submitted online via the Federation's VLE, and staff receive annual training and guidance on how to mark work online. Students are given instruction in how to submit assignments online during the annual induction sessions, and detailed guidance is provided on the VLE. This is supplemented, as necessary, by individual guidance from Directors of Studies and tutors within the houses.

2.65 As part of its training and development of staff, the Federation organised an induction into grading and plagiarism-detection software, marking criteria and standards. Students confirmed that assessment information, including assessment criteria, is contained within the course and module handbooks. They also understand what is required for each assessment and how work is submitted, marked and moderated.

2.66 Feedback to students is generally provided within the timescale set by the awarding body. For the Common Awards this is three weeks. There is some variability in the feedback approaches but overall students were satisfied with feedback arrangements, in particular the timeliness of feedback. While the Federation has instigated a three-week turnaround in marking and provisional results to students, the consistency of feedback from different tutors has yet to be addressed.

2.67 There are strong retention and progression rates. Key Information Statistics on the Federation website indicate a high level of achievement and employment within six months of graduating. The Federation has commenced commissioning a new student data system.

2.68 There is a detailed, identified process for managing RPL requests which includes a checklist for new students. Staff delivering the Common Awards were able to explain the mapping process for RPL.

2.69 Staff are aware of the process for the management of assessment irregularities but reported that there were very few cases. Information relating to assessment irregularities, including definitions and procedures for dealing with suspected instances, is included in student handbooks, and referencing is also included in the instructions for the online submission of coursework.

2.70 Staff understand the structure and role of assessment boards. A member of the Faculty of Divinity chairs the boards for programmes validated by Cambridge University. The Common Awards Boards are chaired by a member of the Federation Management Committee, with a representative from Durham University included in the Board membership.

2.71 The Federation manages a rigorous and robust assessment process, which is understood by staff and which enables students to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B6 is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.72 The Federation operates its external examining processes in line with the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies, which have ultimate responsibility for defining the role of external examiners, and the employment of examiners with appropriate subject experience. The Federation is involved in this process through providing nominations to the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University for final approval. Durham University makes its own appointments without Federation input. The Federation has clear processes for the consideration of external examiner reports. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.73 In considering this Expectation the review team examined relevant committee minutes and met with senior and academic staff.

2.74 The Federation receives external examiner reports through the awarding bodies. On behalf of the awarding body, the chair of the appropriate exam board formally responds to the comments and observations made in the reports. Recommendations from the reports feed into the annual programme review process and are considered by the Teaching and Learning Core Team. The Federation's Academic Committee receives the annual programme review report, which includes a discussion of external examiner comments. Student representatives are able to comment on the external examiner reports as members of the Academic Committee. External examiner reports are published on the VLE and thus available to all students. Following the consideration of the external examiner reports, action plans arising from the annual self-evaluation for each programme are updated.

2.75 The Federation also consults external examiners when proposing changes to existing programmes. The role of the external examiner is well understood by staff as many of them also serve as external examiners at other higher education institutions.

2.76 The Federation makes good use of its external examiners and their reports. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.77 The Federation recently instituted an annual programme review process. The main aim of the review is to secure academic standards and assure quality. The process is clearly defined and facilitated through the completion of an annual self-evaluation (ASE). The completed ASE forms are reviewed by the relevant programme management committees and the Federation's Academic Committee. They are approved by the Federation Management Committee prior to submission to the relevant partner university and, in the case of the Durham Common Awards, to the Church of England Ministry Division.

2.78 The Federation follows the processes for periodic review as laid out by its degree-awarding bodies. Periodic review of the Durham Common Awards is scheduled for 2017-2018 and for the awards of the University of Cambridge in 2018. In the case of the former, the Federation is responsible for engaging with both the Ministry Division and the degree-awarding body. The Professional Doctorate was successfully revalidated in line with Anglia Ruskin process in 2017. The Federation's processes for programme monitoring and review would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.79 The review team tested the Expectation through consideration of a range of documentation including annual self-evaluation forms and action plans, minutes of relevant meetings, student feedback and external examiner reports. In addition, the review team discussed the Federation's approach to programme monitoring and review with staff and students.

2.80 The Federation undertakes annual monitoring for all its awards using a standard annual self-evaluation form, which is a robust and comprehensive document with an emphasis on action planning and enhancement. The annual programme monitoring process is published in the Quality Assurance Handbook, and strong effective partnership working with the degree-awarding bodies ensures that the process is fully embedded. Academic staff were able to describe in detail the process for annual monitoring, which begins with the module evaluation and consultation with students. The module evaluation survey was implemented online in the current academic year. Consideration is then given to the programme, with the teaching team identifying areas for enhancement through a process of critical reflection. External examiners' reports are integral to the process, as is the scrutiny of student data at module level. While student feedback underpins the module evaluation, students reported that they were not directly involved with the review of programmes.

2.81 The programme self-evaluations make explicit reference to student progression and achievement, patterns of the awards and external examiners' reports. Programme teams are also required to comment on the effectiveness of the assessment process, and module and level evaluation response rates. Aspects of good practice for dissemination are identified and resources considered. Explicit reference is made to the actions identified in the previous year, and progress against them. The involvement of students in the review process is also recorded in this document. While there is student representation and dedicated time allocated to their issues in formal meetings, for example, the Common Awards Management Committee students feel that opportunities for consultation could be extended.

2.82 The Federation engages appropriately in periodic review, in line with the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies. The Anglia Ruskin Professional Doctorate was revalidated in 2017. The documentation for the event to which the Federation contributed is extremely detailed and provided opportunities for critical reflection. The last Periodic External Review for the Durham University Common Awards by the Ministry Division of the Church of England took place in 2012.

2.83 Overall, programme review is a detailed process enabling the Federation to assure the quality of learning opportunities and to comply with the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies for the monitoring and review of programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.84 The Federation sets out its procedures for handling complaints and appeals for programmes awarded by Durham University in the student handbook. The appeals procedure details the grounds on which a student can make an appeal, the principles of appeal and a three-stage process. Stage one, the informal stage, requires students to complete a form, available via the VLE, and send it to the Registrar, who will complete an initial review. Stage two, the formal stage, requires students to return a form to the President, who will then appoint a 'Federation Reviewer' with no previous involvement in the case. Finally, if the student is still unsatisfied with the outcome, stage three sets out how they can appeal to Durham University, which will assess the merits of the appeal on procedural grounds.

2.85 Regarding complaints, the procedure clearly sets out the grounds by which a student can make a complaint and the three stages of the complaints procedure. Stage one relates to informal resolution of any complaint, and ends with a full response and information on the formal procedure, stage two. For stage two, students should contact the Registrar, using a complaints form available on the VLE. An independent individual will seek a resolution to the complaint. The third stage involves a review by Durham University, in cases where students feel the complaint has been handled improperly or unfairly. Both sets of procedures also contain the relevant information regarding escalation to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

2.86 The procedure for handling complaints and appeals for programmes awarded by the University of Cambridge is set out in the partner institution agreement. It advises that for appeals, students should use the University's appeals policy and procedure. Regarding complaints, it sets out a four-stage procedure: seeking advice, informal process, formal process and appeal.

2.87 For programmes awarded by Anglia Ruskin University, the complaints and appeals policy is incorporated into the University's Research Degree Regulations, which students receive. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.88 The review team examined the awarding bodies' policies and procedures for academic appeals and complaints, and the information given to students about the processes. The team also held meetings with academic and professional support staff and students.

2.89 The Federation has had no incidences of students making formal complaints or academic appeals, and therefore the veracity of the processes could not be tested, although the procedures pertaining to the Durham University programmes are detailed in the student handbook and forms are available on the VLE. Student feedback suggests not all on-campus students are aware of where to find them. However, students who met the review team explained that they would go to the Director of Studies for information and signposting. Distance learning students pointed to clear information provided on the VLE and during induction. Staff are familiar with the relevant policies and procedures.

2.90 Overall, the Federation has procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities that are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the 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

2.91 The awards delivered by the Federation are built around a praxis model, where the interaction between the academic and the practical enables ministerial formation. The Federation engages closely with churches who send students for training and with churches and Christian agencies where students undertake the practical aspects of the training. The Federation manages two forms of provision with others: attachments and placements. All Anglican ordinands and some lay students are attached to a parish church or a Cambridge University College Chapel during term time. This is known as an attachment and is seen as a vital part of training and formation. Placements are more substantial and are with a church, a group of churches or a Christian agency. They are an important part of the vocational learning.

2.92 All placements and attachments have working agreements. Placements and attachments are overseen in each house by a Director of Pastoral Studies, and reports from placement and attachment supervisors are received in the houses. The Placement Learning Policy provides details on the structure and approval of placements, the support available for students before and during placements, and the assessment of placement learning. The Federation also has written guidelines for attachments and placement supervisors. For students, there is guidance on finding and preparing for placements and advice on how to make the most of them. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.93 In considering this Expectation the review team examined placement and attachment policies and guidance for staff, students and placement providers, including work agreements, handbooks and other guidance material. The team also held meetings with staff, students and placement and attachment providers.

2.94 There is a clear process for the approval of placements. When a placement is undertaken as part of a paper or module, the learning outcomes for that placement are determined by the module or paper. For such placements, students negotiate with their host institution the programme of work that will meet the learning outcomes of the placement. This takes the form of a working agreement that is decided between the placement supervisor, the student and the host institution. The generic learning outcomes of placements that students are required to undertake but which are not part of a formally accredited programme are detailed in the Placement Learning Policy. These placements are also governed by working agreements. Working agreements for all placements and attachments follow a standard template and specify the learning outcomes, work commitments and tasks to be undertaken, as well as supervisory arrangements.

2.95 Placements and attachments enable students to complete module assessments, which require them to reflect on practical experience. Supervisors provide reports to the Directors of Pastoral Studies in the houses, using a standard template. Reports are then used by the ministry department of the church in question. Reports cover how the learning objectives have been achieved and the engagement of students in the work activities against set criteria, and in some cases also comment on professional competence. Student achievement is not graded. Placement and attachment supervisors who met the review team

confirmed that they were fully briefed about the purpose of placements and attachments and aware of their role in enabling ministerial formation, many of them having been former students of the Federation. Students reported that placement and attachment supervisors are able to provide meaningful feedback.

2.96 Students are provided with extensive support by the Federation before and during placements, through both guidance material and pastoral visits by a member of staff. Where pastoral visits cannot be undertaken the Federation recognises the importance of developing channels of communication for students to ensure that procedures for debriefing students are robust. The Federation houses collaborate on the production of appropriate information for students, which is referred to the Federation's Academic Committee for review to ensure oversight of policies and procedures, parity between houses, safeguarding, and clarity of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

2.97 The Federation has appropriate strategies in place to cover circumstances should a placement or attachment break down for whatever reason. Supervisors would contact the Director of Pastoral Studies at the house in question. In addition, one of the houses has a 'traffic light system' which enables the student, the house or the placement supervisor to regularly confirm progress, raise issues or highlight any concerns.

2.98 The Federation has a strong working relationship with supervisors who have a full understanding of ministerial formation. The Federation conducts an annual review of placements and supervisors have the opportunity to provide feedback. There are also annual supervisor days.

2.99 The review team noted the well-managed and documented systems, the support structures for students on placement or attachment, the positive relationships with supervisors, and the detailed attention paid to the individual students to enable their ministerial formation and growth. The review team considered the management and implementation of the personalised, student-focused placement and attachment system, which enhances student development and ministerial formation, to be **good practice**.

2.100 The Federation is actively involved in the management, quality assurance and enhancement of those areas of vocational learning that are delivered in partnership with placements and attachments. The arrangements for delivering learning opportunities are implemented safely and securely and managed effectively. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.101 The Federation delivers a Professional Doctorate awarded by Anglia Ruskin University through a franchise agreement. It also offers research programmes leading to Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) awards of the University. The academic regulations governing both types of research programmes are set out in the University's Research Degree Regulations, and cover the entry requirements to the various types of research degrees, admissions, supervision, assessment and examination processes and academic appeals. All students are appointed a supervisory team in accordance with the University's requirements. Students are also supported through research skills training and researcher development sessions.

2.102 The Professional Doctorate is managed by the Director of Postgraduate Research Programmes, a joint appointment with the University. The Registrar oversees the financial and institutional relationships. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.103 In considering this Expectation the review team examined the awarding body's research degree regulations and related policies and information provided to students and supervisors, and held meetings with academic staff, including supervisors and research students.

2.104 The entry requirements to the various research degree programmes are clearly stated in the Research Degree Regulations. All admissions decisions are made by the University. Applicants are required to undertake an interview. Federation supervisors are involved in interview and selection and the whole process is overseen in the Federation by the Director of Postgraduate Programmes. Research students who met the review team found the admissions process to be smooth. Students also reported that they had been given sufficient information prior to application to make an informed decision, although the relationship between the Federation and the University and who was responsible for what was not always clear to students. Students praised the support received from the Director of Postgraduate Programmes during the admissions process. The Research Degree Regulations are issued anew to students every year and are also signposted in the student handbook.

2.105 For MPhil and PhD candidates, the University provides an induction through an informal meeting at registration and through a compulsory induction day that forms stage one of the University's Researcher Development Programme. In addition, MPhil and PhD students also receive an induction by the Federation house to which they are linked. Professional Doctorate students receive an induction by the Federation.

2.106 All research students are required to attend three compulsory University researcher development sessions, which are designed to support them during their programme of research. This includes a research skills training needs analysis to establish their skills development needs and to create a personal development plan. Students found the training useful in developing their research skills. Study days are also seen as an important

opportunity to build research skills and for peer support. Further training, including ethics training, is available. In addition, the Federation provides research seminars and a summer school in conjunction with the national consortium of Professional Doctorates in Practical Theology, which are valued by students. Students are invited to provide feedback on seminar days and the summer school, which the Federation considers and responds to formally.

2.107 There are opportunities for research students to present research papers and attend conferences. Students expressed an interest in opportunities to participate in teaching, with existing opportunities being limited due to many students working full-time alongside their studies.

2.108 The requirements for the supervision of MPhil and PhD students are specified in the University's Research Degree Regulations, which the Federation implements. Federation staff who have the requisite qualifications and who have completed the mandatory supervisor training provided by the University are able to act as first supervisors. Professional Doctorate students are allocated a Federation advisor. Research students who met the review team expressed satisfaction with the quality of supervision that they receive. They found their supervisory teams to be supportive and to enable progress.

2.109 Research students know to refer to the University if there is an issue with supervision. The annual review process also includes an opportunity to provide feedback on supervision through the inclusion of a private section on quality of supervision. In sum, students cite both the supervisory teams and peer group support as vital in supporting development. This is confirmed by the latest institutional review of the Federation by the University, which commends the quality of the student experience and the support provided to research students by Federation staff.

2.110 Students find learning resources to be sufficient and feel well supported by their supervisors and Director of Postgraduate Research Programmes. They have access to learning resources, study space and facilities in the house to which they are linked, with distance learning students receiving additional support via video link. The VLE is not that well used by research students, with many opting to access the University online resources instead.

2.111 Progress and review arrangements are stipulated in the University's Research Degree Regulations. Federation supervisors are trained to act as panel members for the assessing of research proposals, conduct annual review and participate in confirmation of registration. Students are required to undertake an annual review meeting conducted by a panel of at least two independent academics to determine whether the student is able to proceed to the next year of their programme. Students reported that the process has recently been streamlined and found it to be very thorough.

2.112 The assessment criteria are set out in the University's Research Degree Regulations, as are the grounds for academic appeal, the process for submitting an appeal and the appeals procedure. Stage one papers for the Professional Doctorate are marked by Federation supervisors and the results are considered by the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Subcommittee of the University. Federation staff also act as internal examiners for MPhil and PhD candidates.

2.113 Research students have the opportunity to provide feedback through various channels. Student representatives sit on the relevant Federation committees. For most students their first supervisor would be first port of call, and mechanisms exist if there are issues that need to be escalated. There is a dialogue between students and staff on what actions will be taken in response to their feedback.

2.114 For complaints, the University Student Complaints Procedure applies, as set out in the Research Degree Regulations. All formal complaints are handled by the University. Students are aware of the existence of the complaints procedure but would contact their supervisors in the first instance with any issues. Students feel well supported by staff who are readily accessible, and they regularly meet with their supervisors.

2.115 The 2015 institutional review of the Federation by the University included a recommendation to explore opportunities for collaborative research between the two institutions. The Federation has recently undertaken a major audit of research, including possible avenues of collaborative research.

2.116 Overall, the Federation provides a supportive research environment. It offers students development opportunities and the support they need to complete their programmes successfully. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.117 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All 11 Expectations in this judgement area are met and are judged to have a low risk

2.118 There is one recommendation in this judgement area, which relates to the student representation structure and approach to student engagement (Expectation B5). The review team identified two features of good practice in this judgement area with regard to the approach to student personal and professional development (Expectation B4) and the management of the placement and attachment system (Expectation B10).

2.119 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **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 provider's primary outlet for information is through its website, as well as the VLE for current students and staff. The Federation has a publications procedure, covering both digital and print media. It sets out that the IT Officer checks final proofs of materials produced by Federation staff to ensure compliance with accessibility standards. Public information about the Federation is ultimately reviewed and signed off by the President of the Federation prior to publication. The responsibility for information on the websites of houses lies with the Principal or Director of that house. Individual programme managers are responsible for regularly reviewing programme information. The provider has established internal policies and procedures to enable the Expectation to be met.

3.2 The review team examined the Federation's policies and procedures with regard to the publication of information, as well as a range of printed materials. The team also accessed information provided online through the Federation website and VLE and held meetings with both students and senior, academic and professional support staff.

3.3 There is an Information Technology Strategy, which sets out how the Federation will develop its IT infrastructure as a strategic resource and aids it in meeting its wider organisational goals. This includes student access to information and improving the accessibility of the VLE.

3.4 Programme information is held on two VLEs. Comprehensive and accurate information for the Bachelor of Theology for Ministry is held on the University of Cambridge VLE. For all other programmes, information can be found on the Federation's VLE. Students indicated some discrepancies between printed module information and the content available on the Federation's VLE. This is in part due to the VLE still being fully developed after transition from a previously mandated platform. The Federation has recently developed a policy for publishing in print and on the VLE, with the intention that the VLE will be repository for all programme information. This positive step came in response to student feedback. Guidelines have also been agreed as to what module information should be on the VLE, with permissible variations depending on the module content. The Federation plans to introduce spot checks to ensure broad comparability of programme and module information. The procedures for checking and uploading module guides onto the new VLE are working well, with all of the guides being up to date and accurate.

3.5 The transition to the new VLE has caused some issues for students, with some materials still being kept on the old system. As a result, it has not always been completely clear to students where best to go for information. To help mitigate this issue the Federation has provided in-house VLE staff training and support for students during induction. Student and staff feedback on the new VLE is being reviewed by a working group to produce a development plan and it is hoped that all issues will have been resolved by the start of the 2017-18 academic year. The IT Officer is also undertaking a tour of houses to collate further feedback and provide additional staff training.

3.6 Programme managers review website information to ensure it is up to date. The information available on the website is accurate, suggesting that the sign-off procedure is working as intended. Any major changes to the Federation website are reviewed by the Management Committee and are ultimately signed off by the President. The Librarian provides a further copyright check to ensure that there are no intellectual property breaches. The IT Officer is responsible for maintaining the functionality of links, as the majority of information online is through links to information provided by the awarding bodies. A member of IT staff provides training materials and personal support for staff, with training from awarding bodies also available.

3.7 The Federation has an Information Technology Policy, which can be found in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The policy sets out the rules and regulations for use of information technology by students and staff. Furthermore, there is a social media policy, which also applies to students and staff. Both policies were approved by the Management Committee. The Social Media Policy is thorough and detailed, setting out the differences between oversight for personal and professional accounts, and the varying rules for what is and is not acceptable content. A social media working group has been created to develop the policy further, with representatives from each house, the IT Officer, the Teaching and Learning Advisor, and the Director for Taught Programmes. While the Federation's use of social media is still in its infancy, the processes in place to ensure its proper use going forward are strong. Lastly, the Federation has a thorough Data Protection Policy.

3.8 In summary, the Federation's processes for the production and sign-off of published information are satisfactory. The review team concludes that the provider produces published information for its intended audiences about the higher education it offers that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or good practice in this judgement area.

3.10 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **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 Federation's strategic approach to enhancement is articulated within the Strategic Plan 2017-2022, which clearly states the Federation's aim to enhance the student experience across the range of learning activities. Enhancement activity is also extended in relation to the wider Federation membership, including staff and external partnerships. Strategic actions identified include the development of more flexible learning pathways for part-time, context-based and distance learning students. Explicit reference is made to the Quality Code within the Strategic Plan in relation to staff engagement and curriculum development.

4.2 The Federation Teaching and Learning Strategy 2015-2020 sets out the plans for enhancement. Opportunities for enhancement are identified through the annual programme monitoring and self-evaluation processes. Improving the quality of the learning opportunities is a strategic aim, and the priorities identified in the Teaching and Learning Strategy support the achievement of this. The plan focuses on ecumenical formation, integrated learning and a global context. Staged timescales are provided for the development of enhancements including flexible pathways, changes to the VLE and systems for student feedback. The strategy is reviewed annually by the Academic Committee. The Federation also uses the processes of annual programme review as well as student feedback through the Student Forum, module evaluation and informal student feedback to identify opportunities for enhancement. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The review team tested the Expectation through discussions with students and staff and through scrutiny of relevant documentation including relevant strategies, committee minutes, self-evaluation reports and student feedback.

4.4 There is an ethos within the Federation that expects and encourages enhancement. The President articulated a strong vision for the Federation, which is shared with staff. Students are aware of the ethos of continuous improvement within the Federation but commented that genuine consultation with them in advance of change is less common. Annual quality processes are used to identify institutional areas for enhancement. For example, the development and enhancement of the online coursework submission process and the development of a culture of academic research were identified through the programme review process in the annual self-evaluation report.

4.5 The development of more flexible pathways is an example of the deliberate steps that are being taken by the Federation to improve the quality of the student learning opportunities. Context-based pathways have been developed for all programmes and further developments are planned for distance learning. The implementation of the new VLE for the Common Awards is also evidence of the commitment to enhancement of learning opportunities at the Federation level. While students commented that there had been some issues with the transition to the new VLE (see paragraph 3.5), they appreciate that the Federation took this step to improve their learning environment. The VLE is being used more systematically to support delivery, with staff development underpinning this enhancement. Other examples of enhancement include the development of, and increased access to, the library provision and the coordination of resources for students and staff across the Federation.

4.6 The Federation takes deliberate steps at the provider level to improve the quality of the student learning opportunities through the identification of issues and actions via the annual cycle of quality assurance processes. A systematic approach is taken through the annual programme review. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.7 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Enhancement Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or good practice in this judgement area.

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

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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