Higher Education Review of The City of Liverpool College

June 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at The City of Liverpool College. The review took place from 14 to 16 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Emeritus Professor Andrew Downton
- Mr Josh Elderfield (student reviewer)
- Ms Dorothy McElwee
- Dr Mike Wing.

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

In reviewing The City of Liverpool College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

The themes for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability and Digital Literacy,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about The City of Liverpool College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at The City of Liverpool College.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at The City of Liverpool College.

- The extensive and systematic peer observation programme, which effectively integrates with staff appraisal and personal development to enhance learning and teaching (Expectations B3 and Enhancement).
- The College-wide adoption of the 'flipped classroom' model and strategic enhancement of online and physical resources to support this model (Expectations B3, B4 and Enhancement).
- The comprehensive and strategic use of online and physical resources to enhance student learning (Expectations B4, B3 and Enhancement).
- The wide-ranging and comprehensive links with industry that inform the curriculum and enhance the employability of students (Expectations B4, B1 and Enhancement).
- The responsiveness to the student voice, resulting in positive enhancements to the curriculum (Expectations B5, B1 and Enhancement).
- The quality-assured moderation process for assessment feedback, which enables developmental and timely support for learning (Expectation B6).
- The supportive relationship with Liverpool Media Academy, which ensures comprehensive oversight of the Pearson-validated provision (Expectation B10).
- The strategic approach to enhancing academic quality through systematic, integrated and well-established processes, which continuously improves the student learning experience (Enhancement and Expectation B8).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that The City of Liverpool College is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The Higher Education Internal Review, which has initiated the development of cyclical periodic review (Expectation B8).

Theme: Student Employability

Student employability starts with the College's Higher Education Strategy and is visible in a variety of aspects of The City of Liverpool College's higher education provision. The Strategy prioritises developing students for employment by working with local employers and professional bodies. Employability is supported through the curriculum,

with opportunities for work placements, internships and work-related activities. Support is provided to students in securing employment, including the preparation of CVs, employability tutorials and interview skills. There is a dedicated employability area on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE). The College also encourages teaching staff to be actively involved in industry and maintain current industry links.

About The City of Liverpool College

The City of Liverpool College (the College) is the largest further education college in the city of Liverpool and is part of The City of Liverpool College Group. The College operates from six main sites, five of which are in the centre of Liverpool and deliver higher education provision to 676 higher education students, of which 157 are part time, studying Higher National programmes, foundation and full degrees on behalf of four universities and Pearson.

The College's mission is 'Providing high quality skills and education by delivering opportunities for growth to all people and businesses of the Liverpool City Region' and is supported by seven values and three goals. Part of the College's mission is to recruit students from diverse backgrounds and support the ethos of inclusivity and widening participation, recruiting from 30 of the most 100 deprived areas in England. The key higher education strategic goals include providing higher levels skills for employment and economic growth; therefore, the College works in collaboration with local employers, which supports student employability.

Since the QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in 2011, the College has undergone a major restructuring of higher education management roles and responsibilities, which has initiated the updating of the Higher Education Strategy. Another development is the substantial investment in the development of the VLE, supported by a set of standards.

The recent key challenges the College has faced include the competition for higher education students with higher education institutions both locally and nationally. Also, the College has identified risks that are effectively managed at a strategic level, which include student recruitment during local or national economic downturns, the recruitment of specialised teaching staff, and supporting students during course closures. The College has responded to the challenges of fee and funding changes, as well as positioning itself in the market by developing a strategic approach to curriculum and setting annual higher education targets and plans.

The College has a long-established collaborative partnership with Liverpool John Moores University and delivers five validated foundation degrees and one honours degree programme on its behalf. In the past five years the College has also established collaboration with three other universities - the University of Huddersfield, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford - delivering a range of foundation degrees. The College also delivers Higher National programmes across a range of subjects on behalf of Pearson. In 2015 the College entered into a partnership arrangement as the collaborative lead, overseeing quality assurance, at the Liverpool Media Academy, which delivers Higher National programmes.

The College's response to the recommendations resulting from the QAA IQER in 2011 indicates that all areas listed have been developed. Good practice continues to be disseminated and the College has effectively enhanced the management and delivery of the higher education provision through clear communication, staff development and stakeholder engagement.

Explanation of the findings about The City of Liverpool College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

Explanation of the findings about The City of Liverpool College

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and 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 College offers awards in collaboration with four universities (Liverpool John Moores University, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Salford and the University of Huddersfield) and with Pearson. Overall responsibility for the academic standards of the College's higher education provision is retained by the awarding bodies. In relation to one Pearson award, the College obtains approval, delegating delivery to Liverpool Media Academy, while overseeing all aspects of delivery and quality assurance.

1.2 The College's higher education provision is governed by applying and implementing the approval and validation requirements of its various awarding partners, which in turn ensures that awards meet *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and that relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* are taken into account. All qualifications offered are positioned at the appropriate level of the FHEQ, as stated in validation documents and programme specifications.

1.3 The College maintains academic standards through appropriate programme delivery procedures, and programme specifications provide the guidance for teaching, learning and assessment of students at the appropriate level. Programme specifications, module specifications and assessment plans are designed to mark the achievement of positively defined learning outcomes.

1.4   The meeting of the College's requirements of its awarding bodies and awarding organisation, as well as its own policies and procedures, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.5   The review team scrutinised the College's quality monitoring processes, reports and policies, and their effectiveness in maintaining academic standards, through consideration of quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports, programme documentation and meetings with relevant staff and students.

1.6   Academic staff have a clear understanding of the FHEQ, and of how it is interpreted and applied by the awarding body responsible for validating the programme(s) for which it are responsible. Although the College reports to several different awarding bodies with regard to the academic standards of the awards it delivers, the review team found that senior managers monitor the delivery of programmes effectively through regular meetings of the Higher Education Operations Group. Individual programme teams are fully engaged in maintaining and enhancing academic standards through regular meetings of boards of study and through the College's and awarding bodies' annual monitoring processes. Alignment is confirmed by external examiners and external advisers.

1.7   References to levels, Subject Benchmark Statements and other relevant frameworks, including those of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), are made clearly in programme documentation. Programme and module specifications provide detailed learning outcomes at course and module level respectively. Learning outcomes are communicated through a number of channels, including programme and module handbooks, and the College's VLE, which is viewed as the predominant communication mechanism for all programme material by both staff and students.

1.8   College staff have a clear understanding of the systems that the College and its awarding bodies have in place to secure threshold standards, and of how the FHEQ is interpreted and applied in the modules and awards offered on behalf of each of its degree-awarding bodies. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): 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

1.9   The College operates according to the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding bodies and the awarding organisation. Each of these institutions sets out the frameworks and procedures that ensure the academic standards of awards and qualifications are met in its collaborative partnership agreement with the College.

1.10   The College has established a number of internal policies and processes to manage its academic standards, and ensure they are consistent with each of its awarding bodies' expectations. These include the Research and Scholarly Activities Policy, Higher Education Assessment and Moderation Policy, Academic Misconduct Policy, Academic Appeals Policy, External Examination Policy, Admissions Policy, and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.

1.11   The College Higher Education Strategy Group (HESG) has strategic responsibility for all College higher education programmes, reporting to the senior leadership team and the College Board of Governors. The HESG is chaired by the College Deputy Principal, and other members include: the Head of Higher Education; the Vice-Principal Curriculum; assistant principals responsible for each curriculum area (pillar); the Head of Pastoral Support; the Director of Learning, Marketing and Communications; the Vice-Principal Finance and Corporate Resources; and the Learning Resource Centre Manager. Higher education student and teaching staff representatives and other management and support staff are invited to attend meetings as appropriate. College higher education boards of study and assessment boards report to the HESG and include student representatives. The Higher Education Operations Group, whose remit is to oversee operational implementation of academic standards, student support, enhancement of learning opportunities, and public information, also reports to the HESG. Boards of study and the Higher Education Operations Group both meet at least bi-monthly, and sometimes monthly during term time.

1.12   The awarding bodies' academic frameworks and regulations, combined with the policies and procedures of the College, and the oversight provided by its committee structure, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13   The review team scrutinised the College's processes and their effectiveness through documented quality assurance procedures, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports, and meetings with relevant staff and students.

1.14   College higher education assessment boards meet three times per year for all higher education programmes to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications within the relevant academic frameworks and regulations. These formal meetings consider students' achievement and academic progression, and review and confirm all marks and credit awarded. Partners' assessment boards operate at a higher level and consider award of academic credit and qualifications across multiple awards, and where appropriate across multiple collaborative partners.

1.15   The higher education board of study members include the relevant assistant principal, head of school, and programme leaders responsible for the programmes, and teaching staff and student representatives from each programme. From their meetings with academic staff and students, the review team found that, as well as monitoring, evaluation and review of course delivery, board of study meetings contribute significantly to the inclusion of the student voice in course review.

1.16   In its meetings with senior staff and academic staff of the College, staff explained how the College's own quality framework incorporated all of its awarding bodies' frameworks. All academic staff were aware of the differences between different awarding bodies' requirements (notably between Pearson and university awarding bodies), but at the level of individual programmes, programme leaders work closely with the link tutor of their awarding body on a week-by-week basis and therefore ensure that that body's regulatory framework is accurately applied.

1.17   The College's own regulatory framework incorporates all of its awarding bodies' regulatory requirements, and programme leaders and teaching staff framework at the level of individual programmes have a clear and detailed understanding of the awarding body's quality. 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

1.18   The responsibility for maintaining a definitive record of each programme approved and delivered by the College ultimately rests with the awarding bodies and awarding organisation. It is a requirement of each awarding body and the awarding organisation that awards have a current and complete record of each programme and qualification. These definitive records constitute the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme.

1.19   Arrangements for approving the current version of the official record vary depending on the awarding body or organisation. In the case of awarding bodies, the records are approved at validation or review. In the case of Pearson qualifications, the College produces definitive records based on Pearson's programme specifications using the standard templates. Updates are made variously by the awarding body, or by the College (in the latter case any significant changes are subject to awarding body approval).

1.20   The College evaluates the effectiveness of the processes for establishing and updating the records through the annual and periodic programme review processes.

1.21   The College's adherence to its awarding bodies and awarding organisation's arrangements for the maintenance of definitive documents would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.22   The review team reviewed the programme specifications, programme handbooks, the College's and awarding bodies' websites, and programme approval documentation, and confirmed their understanding of the process for recording and disseminating programme information through meetings with senior and academic staff, and students.

1.23   The definitive records of programmes are mapped against FHEQ standards, Subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements as part of the approval process of the awarding bodies or organisation. Although the form of these records varies, they all clearly describe: the aims, intended learning outcomes, expected achievements of graduates of the programmes, the programme structure, and curriculum and assessment scheme. The programme specifications of all programmes validated by awarding bodies are readily available on the College's VLE. In the case of the awarding organisation, a generic specification is available on the awarding organisation's website, supplemented by programme specific information on the VLE. In addition, each course unit or module handbook acts as a record of its content, structure, component parts, assessment scheme and intended learning outcomes, as approved by the awarding body or organisation. This information is also available on the College VLE.

1.24   Students reported that they found the information they received concerning their academic programmes to be accurate and helpful. There was a clear understanding on the part of staff of the process for approving and updating programme specifications and related documentation, and the role this plays in acting as a frame of reference for delivery and assessment of programmes.

1.25   Programme information provided is accurate and comprehensive, and readily available to students and staff. College processes for preparing and disseminating programme information are sound and are used effectively in line with the awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's requirements. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.26   The College's higher education awarding bodies and awarding organisation have overall responsibility for the approval of programmes delivered by the College, and for assuring that appropriate standards are achieved.

1.27   Approval and reapproval of the programmes delivered by the College follow the frameworks, regulations and procedures of the awarding bodies and awarding organisation. These arrangements are designed to ensure that awards validated by the awarding bodies or awarding organisation are aligned with the FHEQ, and that the qualification descriptors, and the number and level of credits of an award map onto the appropriate qualification within the FHEQ.

1.28   The procedures also require the use of the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements in the design of awards so as to ensure the subject relevance and coherence of the award. Where the awarding bodies allow, the appropriate programme team in the College undertakes detailed design and development of programmes with support from the awarding bodies.

1.29   The College's adherence and acknowledgement of the frameworks, regulations and procedures of the awarding bodies and awarding organisation would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.30   The review team examined a range of documentary evidence, including programme specifications, programme handbooks and other documents related to programme approval, and met senior and academic staff.

1.31   The review team found that the approval processes of the awarding bodies and awarding organisation had been appropriately followed and that there was clear evidence of reference to the FHEQ and to Subject Benchmark Statements. Where the College had input into the design of programmes, the College's processes included external input in order to provide an external view of standards at the design stage. For all awards the College works closely with the relevant link tutor from the validating awarding body or organisation to ensure that programme standards were set at an appropriate level.

1.32   Programme standards and module/course curricula are clearly defined in programme specifications, programme handbooks and module/course unit documentation and form the basis for effective assessment.

1.33   Given the clear application of the awarding bodies or awarding organisation approval processes, the clear articulation of standards within programme documentation, and the link to standards in the assessment tasks, the review team found that the programmes delivered by the College are properly aligned to the FHEQ, are appropriately mapped against the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and that academic standards are set and maintained at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification.

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 (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 College policy relating to assessment submission, marking, moderation and assessment feedback covers the procedures to be followed when marking assessments and coursework, and incorporates College guidance on moderation. The College carries out assessments in accordance with the awarding body and awarding organisation's assessment policies, and is informed by UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant awarding body.

1.35   The College's adherence to the requirements of its awarding bodies and awarding organisation, as well as its own assessment policies and procedures, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.36   The review team tested the Expectation by considering a wide range of evidence provided by the College, including assessment policies and procedures, programme and module specifications, assessment board minutes, external examiner reports and handbooks. The team also met senior and academic staff and students.

1.37   The review team found that the processes and procedures for assessment are effective, and that students have a clear understanding of assessment criteria and know where to find information on assessment.

1.38   The academic staff of the College work closely with their awarding body partners and the awarding organisation for the design and approval of assignments to ensure that assessments are set at the appropriate academic standards, and that marking and grading are standardised and confirmed appropriately.

1.39   Programme learning outcomes are identified in programme specifications and module learning outcomes in module specifications. General information on assessment, marking and grading criteria are provided in programme handbooks and details of assessments in module guides. Regulations, assessment plans and briefs are available in the student handbook and on the VLE, with an overview of deadlines and a calendar of assessment board meetings available.

1.40   The College's responsibility for the setting and marking of assignments is outlined in partnership agreements and confirmed in the responsibilities checklist. Manchester Metropolitan University takes full responsibility for setting assessments, while the University of Salford, the University of Huddersfield, Liverpool John Moores University and Pearson delegate the responsibility to the College.

1.41   The higher education assessment boards are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the relevant assessment regulations and processes for the range of higher education programmes offered within the curriculum. The higher education

assessment boards meet at the end of each assessment cycle (two to three times a year) to confirm the validity of the assessment processes, and internal and external validation processes, and to confirm the final assessment grades for all the students on the set of higher education programmes within the curriculum department/pillar. Assessment board meetings provide opportunities for final approval and review of the awarded outcomes. Robust external examination and internal moderation processes are in place to ensure that ongoing assessment activities are in line with the relevant standards. External examiners scrutinise all assessment processes and decisions, and report on any issues that the College responds to through programme teams.

1.42   The College confirms that assessment information and guidance is now shared more comprehensively with students, particularly via the programme VLE, and this represents an effective way of providing information on assessment. Student feedback on assessment is very positive. Students confirm that assessment briefs are readily available and that they were aware of the criteria required to achieve different grades, with assessed work returned within set deadlines.

1.43   The College, in working with its awarding bodies and awarding organisation, has a range of appropriate processes in place for the effective assessment of learning outcomes, the monitoring of standards, and the associated award of credits and qualifications. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk to be 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

1.44   The College works in collaboration with its awarding bodies and the awarding organisation, which have ultimate responsibility for the quality and standards of higher education at the College. The College adheres its awarding partners' processes for the monitoring and review of programmes and has its own comprehensive internal processes at programme and pillar levels, with reviews feeding into the whole College annual monitoring report (AMR).The College's annual monitoring process promotes discussion between heads of curriculum, programme leaders, programme teams, student representatives, partner institutions (via the link tutor) and the College to ensure that it meets both partner and College requirements.

1.45   There are clear processes in place with defined roles and responsibilities, which, with the awarding body, awarding organisation and College arrangements, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.46   The review team tested the Expectation by considering documentation related to review processes, including performance review and AMRs, pillar self-evaluation reports, the Internal Review Guidance and process, external examiner reports and employer engagement. The team met staff, awarding body representatives, employers and students.

1.47   The evidence reviewed and the meetings held confirmed that the procedures and practices are appropriate for ensuring academic standards are achieved and maintained. The review team saw evidence of internal processes working effectively and the College adhering to its awarding body and awarding organisation requirements.

1.48   The awarding bodies require the College to undertake annual monitoring of the provision in the form of an annual monitoring or evaluation report. This document is informed by external examiner reports, performance data and the programme teams. The awarding bodies support the process, for example the University of Huddersfield's Designated Academic Liaison Officer provides advice as appropriate in all matters relating to the operation of the provision, including preparation of the Annual Evaluation Report. The University also provides support through teaching training and the validation of new staff.

1.49   The annual monitoring reporting process covers all taught higher education provision delivered at the College, validated by the collaborative partner universities and Pearson. It is designed to enable programme teams, heads of school and assistant, vice, and deputy principals to evaluate achievement against institutional expectations for academic standards, in particular student attainment, retention and completion. The process involves the identification of any problems that need to be resolved; the promotion, identification and sharing of good practice; and reflection on feedback obtained from students.

1.50   In addition, the annual monitoring reporting process provides a mechanism by which the Quality Performance and Review Initiatives can maintain an oversight of the

higher education provision. A brief action plan is developed, identifying issues impacting on the quality and standards of the provision that have emerged from consideration of the student performance and feedback data. This action plan should relate specifically to the outcomes of annual monitoring reporting and complements existing action plans.

1.51   The College's performance review process involves four annual meetings with the relevant higher education staff, learning managers and the Director of Learning, who scrutinise and revisit a range of course performance reports and data. These include in-house surveys, retention, attendance and achievement data, complaints, appeals and external examiner reports. Observation of teaching and learning reports are also reviewed to form their judgements and ensure high quality and relevant provision is offered.

1.52   The HESG has a strategic role and provides strategic direction relating to the College's higher education provision. This group has overall responsibility over the safeguarding of the relevant academic standards and quality of the provision. The Higher Education Board of Study, which has student representation, is responsible for overseeing the quality of the provision and implementation of the higher education standards, including all the relevant academic policies and procedures for the range of programmes offered within the curriculum pillar. Employers and a number of staff who are practitioners contribute to the currency of the provision through informing the curriculum staff of industry standards and practices.

1.53   The College implements effective processes for the monitoring and review of programmes, and discharges its responsibilities to its awarding bodies and awarding organisation, allowing for UK standards to be achieved and academic standards to be maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): 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

1.54   Approval processes for the College's courses are set out in the partnership agreements with the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation, and in the College's processes for higher education programme design, development, approval and revalidation. The awarding bodies, who appoint external examiners and assessors, have the overall responsibility for obtaining external expertise.

1.55   The validating universities appoint external examiners, who are invited to attend College assessment board meetings. Their reports and feedback are a critical part of the quality improvement process. They feed into annual monitoring and review, are shared with students through board of study meetings and on the College's VLE, and result in action plans to address any areas of improvement. In the case of programmes approved by Liverpool John Moores University, these have all been subject to closure of the existing programme, and revision and revalidation of a revised programme structure in 2015-16 to align with a new semester academic framework being introduced for all Liverpool John Moores University programmes from 2016-17.

1.56   The teacher education programmes, originally approved for delivery in 2013, are monitored under the agreed University of Huddersfield academic standards procedures through the attendance of College representatives at University-level validation events and exam boards.

1.57   Pearson-validated Higher National programmes follow BTEC assessment and standards verification guidance. There is an annual Quality Management Review meeting with a nominee from Pearson, which provides oversight of all BTEC programmes at the College.

1.58   The College also conducted its own formative higher education review in advance of this review, with input from external experts and critical friends, leading to an action plan to support enhancing the quality of its higher education provision.

1.59   The adherence of the awarding bodies and awarding organisation requirements regarding the use of externality in the design and approval of programmes, and the College's own policies and processes, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.60   The review team scrutinised a range of relevant documentation, including policies and procedures relating to external examining and external examiner reports. Meetings were held with senior staff and teaching staff to understand how external examiner and external adviser input is used to maintain standards.

1.61   Academic staff confirmed that the College followed an internal proposal, development and review process via the relevant board of study and HESG, which, if successful, results in the appointment of a College programme leader to prepare

documentation for external validation by the awarding body. The same process is applied for all university-validated programmes regardless of the awarding university; there are, however, some variations in the process followed for Higher National awards as these require module-level rather than programme-level approval.

1.62   The review team found that programme leaders and teaching staff maintain close links with the relevant awarding body link tutor as the first line of independent expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards. Link tutors from the awarding bodies are involved in internal verification of assessments before they are delivered and then moderate the marking afterwards. The team heard how it was quite common for programme leaders to keep in regular touch with Pearson's external verifiers by phone and email, in addition to their formal annual visit to the College.

1.63   The review team also found that minutes of boards of study are published (and accessible to students) on the VLE for each course, as well as external examiner reports and the responses and action plans of the course teams to these reports.

1.64   The College uses externality at multiple levels (including overall College level) to ensure that its academic framework and standards are consistent with the expectations of its awarding bodies. This was most recently demonstrated during a College-level internal review where the review panel included academics from other regional colleges and universities, an independent higher education consultant, and College students.

1.65   The review team determined that external independent expertise is used at every level from individual assessments up to overall oversight of College provision and processes to ensure UK threshold standards and the standards expected by the awarding bodies are met. 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 other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.66   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.67   All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and the risk is judged low in each case. There were no features of good practice or recommendations in this area.

1.68   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1   The College's awarding bodies and awarding organisation have overall responsibility for approval of their higher education programmes delivered by the College, and for assuring that appropriate standards are achieved. The College follows the relevant awarding body or awarding organisation regulations for the design and approval of programmes.

2.2   The College maintains strategic oversight of higher education programme design, development and approval through the HESG, which holds responsibility for College approval of new programme proposals, and for overseeing approval processes to ensure alignment of programmes with the College's higher education strategic goals.

2.3   The College has in place institutional processes for higher education programme design, development and approval, and has defined a set of higher education programme documents that must be provided at the initial stage of the planning process to ensure that decisions for internal approval for the programme development are based on sound evidence of need, including likely demand and associated predicted student numbers. The HESG gives final approval for a new higher education proposal to be submitted to the relevant awarding body or organisation.

2.4   Programme approval follows the frameworks and regulations of the relevant awarding body with respect to the design and approval of programmes. These vary in the latitude to which the College is permitted to design or tailor its curriculum, with some programmes, for example the Higher National programmes, being almost totally designed by the validating organisation, and other arrangements, for example programmes validated by Liverpool John Moores University, for which the College has considerable input in the design and development of programmes.

2.5   On submission of the relevant documents to an awarding body, validation events are scheduled by the awarding body to review the proposal. In the case of the awarding organisation, any additional requirements for evidence or further discussion are usually mediated through online communication.

2.6   Where there are conditions attached to approval of a programme, then the curriculum team led by the relevant programme leader, supported by the Head of Higher Education, the Curriculum Head of School and the relevant assistant principal, will ensure that conditions are met before the start of the programme.

2.7   Any significant changes to the programmes always require approval by the awarding body or organisation. In the case of some awarding bodies the College may propose changes, although this is not the case for all awarding bodies. The amended programme specifications are approved by link tutors and the College Head of Higher Education before they are published on the VLE.

2.8   The adherence to the awarding bodies' and awarding organisation's processes, as well as the development of the College's own process for planning and developing programmes, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.9   The review team reviewed the minutes of relevant committees, including the HESG and Higher Education Board of Study, and examined documentation related to programme approval. The team also met a range of academic staff, academic support-related staff and senior managers.

2.10   Based on discussions with staff and a review of the documentation, it was clear the extent of the careful planning that is undertaken before new proposals are brought to the HESG for consideration. The initial stages involve reviewing the employment market and consulting key stakeholders to identify market opportunities. Proposals include a written rationale and a business plan. During the planning and design stage the College seeks input from students, employers, professional bodies and other relevant stakeholders. The College will also seek input from the awarding body in the design of the programme and involvement of relevant PSRBs where appropriate. The College additionally involves employers from the relevant industry and students in the programme design and development of programmes before submission of the relevant documents to the awarding body. The relevant school will identify any staffing and learning resources requirements associated with new programmes so as to ensure that the proposal is in line with the available or planned resources in the curriculum area.

2.11   The review team found that the College operates effective processes for programme design and approval, and that these processes have input from a wide variety of stakeholders. The responsiveness to students in terms of curriculum impact is a feature of good practice identified in Expectation B5.

2.12   Higher education provision undergoes an approval process that ensures the quality of the programmes, and their strategic fit within the portfolio of the College's higher education provision. The approval and development process is supported by clear guidance and senior management support. The review team concludes 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

2.13   The College demonstrates transparency of its recruitment, selection and admissions processes to students through a number of channels. Entry criteria and admission processes are specified in the higher education prospectus, on the College website and on the UCAS site to ensure that the selection processes for entry into higher education are underpinned by transparent entry requirements, both academic and non-academic, and present no unnecessary barriers to prospective students.

2.14   The College is responsible for all of its student recruitment and admissions processes with regard to its collaborations with awarding bodies, except for the University of Huddersfield, where responsibility is shared.

2.15   The College oversees the Liverpool Media Academy collaboration, where the partner institution is responsible for operating the admissions process, in line with the College's Admissions Policy and entry criteria. The College is responsible for advising and monitoring the Academy's admissions office to provide support as required.

2.16   Applicants are awarded a place on merit and based on the recommendation outlined in the document Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice by the Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group. The College's Admissions Policy is designed to allow all applicants equal opportunity to demonstrate achievements and potential.

2.17   Offers are made in line with entry requirements, but contextual decisions are also made, based on factors such as work experience in the student's chosen field of study, any particular academic needs, or the College matching the student to a more appropriate programme.

2.18   Support sessions are available for students with particular needs, such as the Disabled Students' Allowance and student finance, which are organised and facilitated by the relevant department within the College.

2.19   Students are provided with information based on the Competition and Markets Authority guidance.

2.20   The heads of school are responsible for ensuring that the staff making decisions on the suitability of applicants for acceptance on to programmes are suitably qualified and trained to make those decisions. This includes periodic and annual training with UCAS, around familiarising with programme curriculum and entry requirements. There are also a number of different levels of training.

2.21   The College employs RPL in line with each awarding body that provides the programme. Entry requirements may be changed for individual students who can demonstrate alternative qualifications or experience that leads tutors to believe that they will be successful on the programme. This is outlined in the College's Admissions Policy.

2.22   The College has a procedure in place for providing the opportunity for students to submit a complaint regarding the admissions process and decisions, which is done via the College website. All complaints are recorded, and an investigating officer is assigned, which is led by the Curriculum Head of School. A full investigation and evidence is required, and a response to the complainant is made within 10 working days. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome, they can then exhaust the external processes.

2.23   The College's Admissions Policy and its supporting procedures, as well as staff awareness of their roles within the admissions process, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.24   The review team tested the ways in which the College conducts its admissions processes and procedures by examining its Admissions Policy, reviewing the College website, prospectus and VLE system, and by talking to admissions staff, academic staff, and students.

2.25   The College makes clear how the processes will be conducted and instructs prospective students about its application and admissions process. The College uses a number of different channels to publish information about its admissions processes and entry requirements, mainly on its website and through its prospectus. Students confirmed that they were satisfied with the level of information they received prior to enrolling at the College. Students mentioned that they met the course leader to discuss the programme and that this one-to-one contact helped them make an informed decision. Students said they were satisfied with the quality of information they received from staff prior to enrolment, which included meeting with tutors to go through their options and to identify the range of support available.

2.26   The contextual decision-making employed by staff in certain circumstances was seen as constructive by students. Students confirmed that they found this process and support benefited those who had not gone through the traditional system of enrolling after school, such as those students who applied through their employer.

2.27   The College is clear about its admissions processes through its Admissions Policy and ensures staff are appropriately trained. Information about these processes and procedures are made clear to students through a range of methods, and students confirmed their satisfaction with the quality of information they received from the College and staff prior to enrolling. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.28   The College has a number of systems in place to articulate, review and enhance teaching and learning opportunities. These are founded on its Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, which is aligned with the Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching* and *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*, as well as being based on partner awarding body practices. Other contributing elements include the Enhancement of Student Learning Opportunities Strategy and action plan; the College's annual and periodic review processes and their oversight by the HESG; and its staff development activities, including research and scholarly activities.

2.29   The College's Higher Education Tutorial Policy specifies how academic staff (generally programme leaders) are responsible for academic and personal development of students and their pastoral care. There are also fitness to practice and work-based learning policies that are applied where formally assessed work placements are an integrated part of the award. The College's Higher Education Student Involvement Policy seeks to: actively involve students in relevant decision-making processes in relation to their course design and delivery; to provide full opportunities for students to express their views and any concerns about their courses; and to ensure that College academic structures and staff are fully responsive to students' views. The College's Employability Policy identifies seven key principles, including strong links with employers to inform the curriculum, the embedding of employability within courses, and the adoption of accredited PSRB standards within the curriculum where appropriate.

2.30   The enhancement of teaching and learning action plan is overseen by the HESG, chaired by the Deputy Principal Quality and Transformation, who reports to the Principal and Board of Governors. Delivery of the strategy is monitored via the Higher Education Operations Group, and filtered down to pillar, school and programme level.

2.31   The policies, strategies and oversight mechanisms, which ensure the provision of effective learning opportunities and teaching practices that the College has developed, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.32   The review team scrutinised documentation, processes and policies, and met staff and students, to determine the ways in which the College enhances the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner and enhance their analytical, critical and creative thinking.

2.33   In its meetings with staff, the review team heard that in response to a recommendation from its recent internal College periodic review, the College had developed and split its previous Higher Education Teaching and Learning with Enhancement and Assessment Strategy into an Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, and a separate Higher Education Enhancement of Learning Opportunities Policy and action plan, thus allowing the College to better define the terms 'enhancement' and 'learning opportunities' within its own higher education context. The panel concluded,

from the evidence of its review, that this change had provided greater clarity for College staff on how to develop enhanced learning opportunities in the College's context, and had contributed to a well-embedded culture of enhancement and identifiable progress in teaching arrangements and resources throughout the College.

2.34   The College's Higher Education Student Charter and Higher Education Induction Programme assist in ensuring that students are aware of their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided, and provide initial guidance and links to information specifying the support available, including programme and module handbooks and specifications, and higher education policies and procedures, all of which are made available through the College VLE. Individual student support is provided through the College tutorial system, which also provides the mechanism through which tutors monitor student attendance and engagement, and provide advice and support where necessary, utilising the College attendance monitoring system.

2.35   Through the scrutiny of minutes and evidence of student feedback, the review team found the College works in close partnership with higher education students, in line with its Student Involvement Strategy. Student feedback is obtained through module feedback forms, higher education surveys of all student years based on the National Student Survey (NSS) questionnaire, regular focus groups to discuss specific issues, and student membership of boards of study, as well as annual monitoring and review panels, which provide a regular programme-wide student voice. The student submission to this report strongly endorses the effectiveness of this collaboration, and confirms the further progress that has been made in reinforcing the range and robustness of feedback processes since the IQER of 2011. Students that the team met were also positive about the feedback opportunities that the College provided about their courses, and felt that the College responded positively to their feedback. Student feedback that directly informs the curriculum is an area of good practice identified under Expectation B5.

2.36   The review team found that all teaching staff undertake several types of annual formal teaching observations, including peer observations and formal observations linked to annual appraisal. Heads of school and vice-principals have a licence to observe any teacher, and a higher education-specific advanced lecturer has been appointed to lead higher education teaching practice. Formal observations are either graded as effective or requiring improvement; in the latter case, teachers liaise with the advanced lecturer, who provides personal development support prior to re-observation.

2.37   Staff development and enhancement of higher education teaching is supported by means of systematic guidance provided in feedback from the higher education Observation of Teaching and Learning criteria, which are based on the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Professional Standards Framework, and have been revised for 2015-16. Staff are also provided with higher education-specific dedicated continuing professional development (CPD) time to pursue and develop research and scholarly activity, as well as a range of College-wide CPD activities, including four specific higher education development days each year, and allocated CPD time for all teaching staff every Wednesday afternoon. Appraisal and monitoring of staff teaching is recorded on the College's online system. The extensive and systematic peer observation programme, which effectively integrates with staff appraisal and personal development to enhance learning and teaching, is **good practice**.

2.38   As part of its enhancement of teaching practices, the College, in response to HEA guidance and feedback from students, and through sharing of good practice with its university partners, identified independent learning skills as a key area for further development in its higher education provision. To avoid over-reliance by students on conventional small-group teaching, the College decided to increase support for independent

learning by switching all programmes to the 'flipped classroom' model (where traditional lectures are replaced with online lectures, and face-to-face class time is used principally for follow-up problem classes, interactive seminars and formative review and feedback). To support this initiative, programme teams use a common scheme-of-work template; flipped learning is then used for delivery of content, and peer observation to identify the best examples of effective use. Feedback from the College's 2015 annual course surveys demonstrated that students found this teaching style more intellectually stimulating and interesting than in previous years. The College-wide adoption of the 'flipped classroom' model and strategic enhancement of online and physical resources to support this model is **good practice**.

2.39   The College makes extensive and regular use of Key Performance Indicators (including the UK-wide Key Information Set, and local engagement data maintained using the College's student statistics system), both through national statistics for graduating students and internal surveys of continuing students using a NSS equivalent survey. Since 2012, overall satisfaction (as measured by NSS questions) has increased from 77 per cent to 94 per cent, with notable improvements in scores for learning resources, following College investment in identified enhancements to its physical and online facilities. The College uses You Said, We Did action plans to address issues identified at institutional level, and focus groups, as well as feedback from boards of study to determine action plans for individual programmes. The review team found evidence of strong and systematic use of action plans by the College to address areas of improvement strategically at programme, pillar, and College level, and also with respect to academic support areas.

2.40   Employability outcomes for College students, as measured by the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey, are also good, with 61 per cent of students in full or part-time employment and 29 per cent undertaking further study in the 2014 survey. This is an encouraging outcome when account is taken of the demographics of the local region and the high proportion of widening participation students that the College enrols.

2.41   The College has various arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning that are effective and appropriate with noted positive student outcomes. Staff are fully engaged in practices and processes that enhance the student learning experience, which has resulted in increased student satisfaction and two areas of good practice have been identified. The review 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

2.42   The College provides support for students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential in a number of areas, including: guidance and information to support applicants and wider programme information; support for transition into higher education study; tutorial and individual pastoral support; support for dealing with disabilities and learning difficulties; and the transition from higher education into employment or further study on completion of their programme. Signposting to all the College's support resources (both internal and external) is provided through the higher education student handbook, and through the College's higher education personal tutor system. The handbook includes links to course content, teaching, learning and assessment (including academic misconduct), quality assurance processes, consumer rights, student voice arrangements, financial information, and tutorial and employability support. A similar higher education staff handbook ensures staff also have ready access to all the same information.

2.43   Increasingly, the initial point of access to all student support services is via the College's online information resources, including the 'My College' student intranet, and the College VLE and higher education webpages, for all academic information and support. Alternative means of access are also provided through printed prospectuses and information, and programme and module handbooks. Links are also provided to partner VLEs and websites to facilitate access to their support.

2.44   The College's Higher Education Tutorial Policy specifies both the academic and pastoral responsibilities of students' personal tutors, who are appointed from among the curriculum staff on a student's programme, and also have the role of monitoring their attendance, performance and progression through termly progress meetings, as well as at induction. Tutors make use of the College's online progress monitoring system to set individual targets and record progress at each tutorial meeting, and, where necessary, refer students to specialist support.

2.45   Online teaching and learning resources, IT, and computer and specialist laboratories complement direct academic support for students, and support diverse learning methods. The College's current audit and student satisfaction survey indicates that resources within the Learning Resource Centre are below its target benchmark, and the College is therefore planning to expand Centre resources and improve student awareness of the range offered by offering higher education-specific Centre induction sessions throughout the year. The student submission to this report is, however, very positive about the current Centre resources and the increased provision introduced since 2011, including the provision of more dedicated higher education study space.

2.46   Employability support is initially integrated with the student's taught programme, starting at induction, and wherever possible, including realistic work-related assessment. Some programmes include employability-related modules, while others include tutorial support intended to help students develop their CVs, search for jobs and plan their careers. Where programmes include formal work-based learning elements, the College's work-based learning policy specifies how student progress is monitored and assessed, including through visits to the student on placement.

2.47   The College serves some of the most deprived and diverse areas of the country, and strives to provide equal and fair access opportunities to all. Its widening participation strategy and fair access agreement identify the specific targets and actions the College is taking to ensure it fully supports equal and diverse access to all its students.

2.48   Students regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the VLE and other physical learning resources, and audits and reports on levels of student access are also monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of online support. The student submission to this report indicates that students are very satisfied with the levels of support and advice provided by the College through the tutorial system, College advice and support services, and in relation to employability.

2.49   The policies and procedures that allow the evaluation and monitoring of resources enabling student achievement would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.50   The review team considered a range of documentary evidence and met staff and students to investigate the approach the College takes to ensuring that students develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

2.51   The review team found that employers contributed strong and varied support to the higher education provision, with several companies enjoying longstanding and productive symbiotic relationships with the College. Interactions included: supporting annual student placements; contributing to seminars, lectures or assessment panels for student presentations; and engagement with the College's employability support activities such as careers events.

2.52   Several of the employers also confirmed that they contribute informally to annual reviews of programmes, in particular by advising on vocational aspects of programme developments, such as updating laboratories and their equipment. As a result of their close and enduring links, they were able to confirm that the College develops and achieves graduates with the broad academic and employability skills that industry and businesses are seeking, confirming the statistical evidence of the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education outcomes. The wide-ranging and comprehensive links with industry that inform the curriculum and enhance the employability is **good practice**.

2.53   With regard to learning resources, the College provides an induction to new students on available College resources, including higher education-specific resources both online and directly to student groups. There are also subject-specific inductions and an introduction to academic research resources, including increased provision of online journals and e-textbooks. In response to disappointing 2015 student survey feedback on resources, the College organised higher education focus group meetings in January 2016 to identify student priorities and issues, for example local shortages of resources in some subject areas, the need for more quiet study space, and requests to access resources later in the evening. The follow-up action plan has immediately resolved most of these issues, while others require longer to complete additional development and infrastructure updates.

2.54   College resources are provided on all five sites according to the required learning environment to deliver programmes based in each. This includes IT, software, hardware, specialist and laboratory equipment needed to deliver specific programmes, and seminar rooms, workshops, studios, laboratories and performing arts space to meet all learning requirements, which are fully accessible. Since the last IQER, and in response to student feedback, higher education social and study space has been expanded to provide dedicated quiet higher education areas at each of the College sites, which are managed by students. The student submission to this report confirms the significant progress and development that has taken place to enhance the learning environment and resources since 2011.

2.55   There have been substantial developments and upgrades to the estate and physical infrastructure of the College since 2011, and continuing commitment to further invest over the next two years. These were recognised and acknowledged by students both in their meeting with the review team and in the student submission to this report. The College cited a number of additional support roles and resources that had been developed since 2011 to improve support for students with financial hardship, disabilities or learning difficulties, to address increasing student demand in all these areas.

2.56   Earmarked funding is made available annually to support enhancement of learning opportunities from higher education, technology and online learning innovation funds. Specific individualised support and resources are provided where necessary for students with learning difficulties, disabilities, or to support widening participation.

2.57   The review team also reviewed the content of the College VLE, in line with feedback from both students and staff meetings that it had increasingly become the default method of sharing course content and activities between staff and students. This is confirmed by the VLE higher education access statistics collected by the College, which demonstrate that daily page accesses have almost doubled in the first semester of 2015-16 compared with the previous academic year. The statistical evidence is also consistent with the positive views expressed by students during the review and in the student submission to this report.

2.58   Standards for higher education programme pages and course files have been established, and a VLE audit is conducted every six months to ensure full implementation. Higher education programmes are all expected to meet the bronze level standard, which specifies core course information, access to online coursework submission and plagiarism checking software, and key student feedback evidence (surveys, boards of study and focus group meetings). Increasing numbers of programmes now meet higher silver and gold standards of VLE provision, which include broader online e-learning activities and enhanced learning, including multiple online learning and assessment activities, and audited regular usage of these enhanced tools.

2.59   Following these developments, the College is now working with JISC and a national training provider to develop BTEC software that will be shared with other colleges. The comprehensive and strategic use of online and physical resources to enhance student learning is **good practice**. The good practice is also linked to the good practice identified under Expectation B3, which enables the 'flipped classroom' initiative.

2.60   The effectiveness of the College's support for student development is measured and evaluated through AMRs, which summarise student achievement, progression and retention, and through student satisfaction surveys and targeted focus group meetings. Data is monitored by the Higher Education Operations Group and senior leadership team on a fortnightly update basis, and the College considers this detailed and regular oversight to underpin its favourable in-year student retention and positive employment outcomes.

2.61   The College has substantially developed and continues to develop its support, and physical and online resources, for students in the last few years. Two areas of good practice are identified that highlight the College's extensive links with employers and the comprehensive and positive use of the College's VLE. The review team concludes that 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

2.62   The Higher Education Student Involvement Policy sets out its student engagement activities that the College supports, which include module and course feedback; student participation at departmental board meetings, including boards of study; and access to and promotion of active participation at student surveys, both internal and national, such as the NSS.

2.63   The College makes clear in its Higher Education Student Involvement Strategy the representational structures, outlining the different student officer roles and the meetings they attend. The Strategy also demonstrates how it engages with the Students' Union, by having student representatives and Students' Union officers among the membership of College committees and College-level meetings, such as the Student Parliament.

2.64   There is a record of students directly impacting on policies and procedures through You Said We Did focus group meetings. Examples of changes in procedures from these include reducing the loan period of books and the introduction of a policy around resources to be included in induction information, as well as the implementation of identification cards to students.

2.65   At the Higher Education Focus Group meeting, students confirmed that the College offered them opportunities to express their views and that tutors are approachable and available to share their views with. Students also confirmed during the review visit that they could see the College responding to their feedback by taking action.

2.66   The policies and procedures around student engagement and the mechanisms in place to allow the student voice to be heard throughout various levels of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.67   The review team tested the College's demonstration of the Expectation by referring to the boards of study minutes, Higher Education Focus Group minutes and the Higher Education Student Involvement Strategy. The review team also examined the feedback and actions taken in the You Said, We Did minutes. The team met academic and professional staff and students.

2.68   There are robust processes in place to facilitate effective student engagement and feedback, through the inclusion of student representatives at boards of study meetings, recording feedback, including actions through You Said, We Did focus groups, and by providing training to student representatives.

2.69   Training is provided to students to support them in their role of student representatives during term one in September. There is one-to-one support available, rolled out over a three-week period at different times over a number of different days; this is facilitated by the Student Engagement Team within the College. Higher education-specific training is provided. Student representative training includes methods for obtaining information and feedback from their cohorts. A group message service is in place, which student representatives established, as they found this an effective and engaging way to prompt discussion and share issues. Students confirmed during the visit that their feedback was valued and acted upon, highlighting a number of examples where change was made as a result of student representatives raising issues at

the various College committees. This is reinforced by the action plan set out in the You Said, We Did focus group minutes.

2.70   The review team found that, as well as student feedback impacting on procedures and resources, the College's engagement with students also informed curriculum. Students provided examples of curriculum change through feedback, including the replacement of a classical module in Performing Arts to a contemporary module following students feeding back to their student representative. In this way the College demonstrates that it deliberately engages students as partners in the enhancement of their learning. The responsiveness to the student voice, resulting in positive enhancements to the curriculum, is **good practice**.

2.71   The College has clear processes and mechanisms in place to engage with student feedback to improve the quality of students' overall experience, with clear change made as a result, which has had a proven positive impact on students. Good practice has been identified showing the College's positive engagement with students as partners. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.72   The College operates under its awarding bodies and awarding organisation regulations, and within these frameworks the College has established clear higher education structures, responsibilities and communication lines, in addition to specifying the membership, procedures, powers and accountability of assessment boards. This information is available to all members of teaching, support and management staff involved with higher education programme delivery and is accessible to external members of the assessment boards.

2.73   There are defined procedures for setting, marking and moderating assessments, for dealing with mitigating circumstances and for the RPL. The College operates assessment policies, regulations and processes to ensure that the standard for each award of credit or a qualification is set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is equitably judged against these standards.

2.74   The College operates under agreements, regulations and with its own policies and procedures for assessment, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.75   The review team tested the Expectation by considering a wide range of documentation, including programme and module handbooks, policies pertinent to assessment, and external examiner reports. The team also reviewed the College's RPL Policy and assessment board minutes, and met senior and academic staff and students.

2.76   The RPL Policy is based on Pearson's Higher National qualification guidance and also refers to the relevant awarding bodies' admissions criteria, as the final admission decision rests with them for their validated provision. Guidance for RPL applicants is available and applicants can be supported throughout the process of application and assessment for recognition. As the College has not received many RPL applications in the past three years it has been recognised that more active promotion and an outward-facing guidance may be required to ensure that all higher education applicants are fully aware of it. Collated information about the use of RPL and credit exemption is made available as part of the annual quality process.

2.77   Assessment information for each programme is summarised in module and programme specifications, and in more detail in programme and module handbooks, as well as on the VLE. Individual module handbooks contain assignment briefs and summaries of assessment criteria. The College's assessment policy provides information on assessment submission, including e-submission and plagiarism checking, monitoring of coursework submission, anonymous marking, second-marking and moderation, and formative versus summative assessment and feedback.

2.78   Assessment plans map all assessment and learning outcomes against planned assessments on the programme with assessment briefs moderated, either by the internal moderator or the collaborative university partner, in line with academic regulations.

An electronic submission system is fully implemented and triggers assessment declaration confirming the student's own work. A number of assessment formative and summative tools are used subject to the nature of the module and the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

2.79   The College ensures that all of its assessment practices are aligned to the requirements of its awarding bodies or awarding organisation, with appropriate verification mechanisms in place that are carried out in consultation with the awarding bodies. The College also oversees the assessment practices at the Liverpool Media Academy on behalf of the awarding organisation. The majority of College students confirm that assessment arrangements are fair and that feedback is timely and developmental.

2.80   Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are adopted from the relevant awarding bodies and awarding organisation. This is clearly articulated within the College's Assessment and Moderation Policy. Exam-controlled conditions and invigilation guidance are clearly defined and implemented across all College-based assessment events. This process has also been implemented at the Liverpool Media Academy, overseen by the College.

2.81   Students confirmed the usefulness of the information provided on assessment and the timeliness of feedback offered to inform future learning. Feedback to students is provided through a number of delivery modes, including written feedback, verbal feedback, through the use of plagiarism-detection software, and often by one-to-one meetings. Students also confirmed the value of information provided on assessment on the VLE.

2.82   College policy requires assessment work to be marked within 15 days from submission, and that formal written and verbal feedback be provided within this timeframe. Written feedback is provided on the assessment feedback form and is expected to be timely, specific, constructive and helpful, with a clear indication of the academic quality of the assessed work against assessment outcomes. Feedback on assessment is audited through the internal moderation process. The moderator checks assessment briefs, decisions and feedback to ensure students know what is required to meet the learning outcomes and that feedback is specific and supportive for learning. The Assessment and Moderation Policy provides the overarching approach to feedback, and the College systematically evaluates and enhances all assessment policies, regulations and processes to ensure consistency of practice. The quality-assured moderation process for assessment feedback, which enables developmental and timely support for learning, is **good practice**.

2.83   Staff involved in the assessment process are provided with training and support and their professional experience is monitored through external examiner feedback, appraisal and the observation of teaching and learning processes. Recently updated and formalised higher education staff induction programme is now offered to all new staff involved with delivery of higher programmes covering full assessment regulations, including moderation and marking. Higher education induction for students covers relevant elements of assessment policies and directs students to the full set of resources and guidance on the VLE.

2.84   Staff and students' higher education handbooks are available on the VLE, as well as programme handbooks. The College operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice. The Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure, and related documents and guidance for staff and students, are designed to support the process and to ensure understanding and awareness of what constitutes unacceptable academic practice.

2.85   Assessment boards consistently apply regulations set by the awarding bodies and the awarding organisation for progression within programmes and the award of credits

and qualifications. All assessment practices are reviewed annually in response to students' feedback, external examiners' feedback and link tutors' feedback, where applicable, and the College is working to establish a more systematic approach to evaluating and enhancing all assessment policies, regulations and processes.

2.86   The College's assessment processes are thorough, reviewed regularly and systematically applied. Key stakeholders, including students, external examiners and staff, confirm this and acknowledge that assessments are fair and that feedback is valued and received in adherence with the College's timelines for feedback on assessment. Moderation of assessment feedback is identified as a feature of good practice. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.87 The College works in collaboration with its awarding bodies, who appoint external examiners to carry out the responsibilities of externally reviewing the programmes on an annual basis. Appointment of the external examiner for each higher education programme awarded by a university partner is done in consultation and with the agreement of the College, with a requirement of the College to engage with external examiner reports and visits.

2.88 Pearson appoints external examiners for the subject that the College is offering, and their role and expectations are clearly defined in the guidance documents relating to standards verification.

2.89 The College receives external examiner reports from each awarding body and awarding organisation, which are used to inform the annual monitoring process.

2.90 The College ensures that the name, position and institution of the external examiners are included in the programme handbook provided to students. Student representatives are invited to meet external examiners during the visit. The College has an immediate dialogue with the external examiners, who engage with the College to arrange visits with staff and students.

2.91 The College holds discussions with students about the role of external examiners during its boards of study meetings, which is discussed in the majority of the meetings. Students are also informed about external examiners during induction, and are advised to refer to the VLE for further information.

2.92 It is College policy to make external examiners' annual reports available to students; reports are published on the VLE and included in the AMR, which is also shared with students. This is not necessarily the case with all awarding bodies, with the University of Huddersfield making external examiners' reports available via its website on the Registry page. Reports are saved to the Blackboard Community sites at Liverpool John Moores University. At Manchester Metropolitan University, reports are circulated within the University as part of the continuous monitoring and improvement process, but they are also available publicly, on request, through the University's Centre for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement. At the University of Salford, reports are available through the relevant school. Higher National programmes follow the College's External Examination Policy. The same external verifiers are used for the Higher National programmes delivered at the Liverpool Media Academy.

2.93 The arrangements in place for the use of external examiners' reports and input to monitor and improve higher education provision at the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.94 In testing this Expectation the review team examined documentation, including boards of study minutes, policies and procedures, such as awarding bodies' external examiner processes and their reports, responses and action plans. The team also met College and Liverpool Media Academy staff and students to establish the scrupulous use of external examiners.

2.95   External examiner reports are used to inform annual monitoring of the provision, in the form of an annual monitoring or evaluation report.

2.96   External examiner reports are shared with the team through the AMRs and approved during the programme board of study, with attendance of a student representative. This student representative would normally disseminate feedback to the rest of the students.

2.97   The actions taken as a result of reports, or the reasons for not taking action, are formally recorded in the external examiner's report, which demonstrates the College's proactive approach to making changes in light of their feedback. Follow-up action plans are circulated to the Head of Higher Education, and to the relevant head of school and assistant principal.

2.98   The programme leader will inform the external examiner in writing of the proposed action plan and will provide student representatives with the opportunity to be involved in this process when the external examiner's report is discussed at the board of study meeting.

2.99   The College holds discussions with students about the role of external examiners during its board of study meetings, as well as inform them during induction. External examiners have also visited the College, and students confirmed during the review visit that some of them had met examiners.

2.100   The College has positive relationships with external examiners, which is a result of regular dialogue and contact.

2.101   Students are aware that they can access external examiner reports via the VLE system, which suggests the College has taken the appropriate action to ensure students understand their role. Information is also available in programme handbooks, and this applies to every awarding body. The College has therefore effectively provided platforms for students to be aware of external examiners and their role.

2.102   Higher National programmes follow the College's External Examination Policy, and a Pearson course uses the same external examiners that are used for the Liverpool Media Academy collaboration.

2.103   The review team found that the approach the College has taken to make scrupulous use of external examiners has been effective, given the strong relationship the College and external examiners have established, and by having effective platforms in place such as board of study meetings, resulting in students having an appropriate level of knowledge and awareness about examiners and their roles.

2.104   The College establishes a dialogue with the external examiners from appointment, and their subsequent reports are used robustly in the College's monitoring of programmes. External examiners engage with the College to arrange visits with students and staff. External examiner reports are available to students on the VLE system. Students are also informed about the role of external examiners both during their induction, and in Board of Study meetings. 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

2.105   The College has a number of monitoring processes in place for the review of their programmes. The College follows the awarding bodies and awarding organisation processes for the monitoring and review of programmes and has its own comprehensive internal processes at programme and pillar levels, with reviews feeding into the whole College AMR. Reviews at all levels are contributed to by feedback from students, external examiners, employers and staff engaged on the programmes, and data and information is used to inform the College of quality standards and to develop appropriate action plans. The HESG oversees the outcomes of the review processes and confirms the higher education annual provision plan and changes based on the outcomes of review activities.

2.106   The College shares responsibility for programme monitoring and review with its awarding bodies and the awarding organisation. Quality monitoring processes and a range of review audits are operated systematically and consistently, which would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.107   The review team scrutinised the College's monitoring and review processes and their effectiveness through consideration of the validating universities' documentation, internal papers and minutes of College committees, as well as through meetings with staff, students and partner representatives.

2.108   The College's Higher Education Structure and Communication Lines document defines the processes, roles and responsibilities for higher education. Staff are provided with appropriate training and support to enable them to effectively engage in review processes. Performance data is discussed by staff at Higher Education Operations Group and HESG meetings.

2.109   At course level a review of module and assessments linked with the Key Information Set takes place in March every year. Boards of study at pillar level receive annual programme reviews, which are produced by programme leaders. These are developed in response to external examiner reports and feedback from students and employers, and take the form of AMRs.

2.110   Higher education performance reviews at course/school/pillar level are carried out termly, where the programme leader and/or the relevant head of school and assistant principals report on the higher education programme performance at the performance monitoring meetings based on the live and most current key monitoring information, as well as on the actions from the previous performance review meeting.

2.111   The annual monitoring reporting process covers all taught higher education provision delivered at the College, which is validated by the collaborative partner universities and the awarding organisation. It is designed to enable the management and programme teams to evaluate achievement against institutional expectations for academic standards, identify any problems that need to be resolved and to promote the identification and sharing of good practice. In addition, the process provides a mechanism by which the Quality Performance and Review Initiatives can maintain an oversight of the higher education

provision. The process also contributes to the College's effectiveness in enhancement, which has led to the identification of good practice by the review team.

2.112   The student and employer voice is taken into consideration in the review processes to inform curriculum development and contribute to the enhancement of the curriculum. The student representative system enables students to be represented at programme level and actively participate in the monitoring and review processes. Regular contact with employers facilitates currency of practice within the higher education provision and confirms the responsiveness of the College to feedback.

2.113   The College's AMR is produced with input from staff, students, collaborative partners, external examiners and other stakeholders and making use of external benchmarks to further enhance the quality of learning opportunities and higher education processes and procedures. The College actions issues arising from monitoring and review and has evidenced changes made to the provision following feedback from external examiners, employers and students.

2.114   The most recent internal College-wide higher education review, organised and conducted following the QAA Higher Education Review format, took place from November 2014 to March 2015. This review process was led by the Head of Higher Education and overseen by the HESG. This was conducted by a panel of four critical friends, including higher education academic managers from other higher education institutions and collaborative universities, and a consultant with substantial higher education experience and responsibilities for higher education programme monitoring and programme review.

2.115   The review was also informed by student submissions, with the Lead Student Representative participating as a panel member. This review considered the draft Higher Education Review self-evaluation report and student submission, and involved interviews with a cross section of College stakeholders. It provided a useful mechanism to develop a formal periodic review process, as the review team found during the meetings with staff and in the evidence some confusion over the definition of a cyclical periodic review process. The review team **affirms** the Higher Education Internal Review, which has initiated the development of cyclical periodic review.

2.116   Overall, the College has effective processes for monitoring and review, which meet its requirements and that of its awarding body and organisation partners. These include the systematic minuting of meetings, evidence of review documentation, and meeting with staff and partner representatives, students and employers; this confirms that the higher education provision is deliberately monitored and reviewed. The review team concludes the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.117   The College sets out its complaints and appeals process through its Complaints Policy and Procedure. This includes the College providing students with a complaint form, which is accessible through its complaints department. A receipt of acknowledgement is sent to the complainant within two days and the complaint is allocated to the relevant investigating officer. A written response is sent to the complainant within 10 working days during term time. The same timescale applies to appeals.

2.118   The investigation of the appeals and complaints processes provides the College with an important source of feedback, which contributes to the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. This has been evidenced through the reduced number of complaints, as well as an improved overall student satisfaction with higher education provision.

2.119   The College sets out its procedures that offer opportunities for early and/or informal resolution. This includes advising students to speak to their personal tutor, discussing the issue with their student representative, as well as speaking to the relevant support staff, such as the assistant principal or the Students' Union Advice Centre. Students confirmed during the review visit that they could approach tutors and other staff to talk about their complaint.

2.120   The policies and procedures supporting fair and accessible arrangements for making complaints and appeals at the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.121   The review team examined the College's complaints and appeals procedures and spoke with staff and students.

2.122   Every complaint is reported to the Senior Leadership Team on a bi-weekly basis. Through the centralised process, any emerging issues, trends or improvements can be made, which provides the College with a source of feedback that contributes to the enhancement of learning opportunities.

2.123   The scope and grounds for academic appeals are stated in the Higher Education Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure, as are the circumstances that are not grounds for such appeals.

2.124   The College sets out in its Higher Education Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure that if the complaint has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, it may be requested that their complaint receives an independent external review, for example through exhausting the process at the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.125   The College makes clear that the procedures and responsibilities of its awarding bodies are in line with its own, assuring staff and students are aware of them in the organisation in which they are working.

2.126   There is a You Said, We Did section on the VLE system where students can see how the College proceeded with a complaint and how it was resolved.

2.127   The College makes clear in its Complaints Policy and Procedure the responsibilities for each factor of the complaints process, explicitly demonstrating the members of College staff involved in each aspect; staff confirmed during the review visit that they were aware of and understood their duties. Complaints are recorded and processed, and reported to the Senior Leadership Team.

2.128   Students confirmed that they were aware of the complaints process and mentioned that they find out through the VLE system. The College effectively demonstrates how it can learn from complaints that are resolved, and how recurring issues can be identified and acted upon at a more strategic level.

2.129   Students met by the review team were aware of how to access information about complaints and appeals, and that this was done through the VLE system. They recognised that they could speak to the relevant staff if they had any concerns, and understood the purpose of early resolution.

2.130   The College has a Complaints Policy, which sets out its procedures for complaints and appeals. The College effectively makes this information clear to students by publishing it on the VLE, via the You Said, We Did section. Students confirmed they were aware of the complaints procedures. The review team concludes that Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.131   The College works in partnership with a private training organisation, the Liverpool Media Academy, acting as the lead institution with respect to five Pearson validated Higher National programmes in the subject areas of creative media, music or the performing arts.

2.132   A key College objective is to ensure that the student experience at Liverpool Media Academy has parity with equivalent programmes in the UK, and that the relevant procedural and regulatory expectations of Pearson with respect to academic standards and quality assurance are met. The College's HESG has overall responsibility for the academic management of collaborative programmes. The Head of Partnerships oversees the overall partnership contract with the College, while at programme level the College-appointed link tutor provides advice in terms of quality assurance, academic regulation and practices, while the partner link tutor is responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme at the Academy.

2.133   The arrangements for delivering learning opportunities at Liverpool Media Academy are established as part of the programme approval process and described in the relevant approval documentation. This includes the contract between the College and the Academy, which lays out the quality arrangements and defines the rights and responsibilities of the College, the Academy and Pearson. The quality assurance arrangements build on the quality processes described in the College's Higher Education Staff Handbook, with a number of additional elements required to address the collaborative nature of the relationship. The programme and module specifications, which are agreed between the College and relevant degree-awarding body, act as the definitive point of reference for the programme curriculum. The duties and responsibilities of the external examiners are specified by Pearson, and in the College's Code of Practice for External Examiners. Taken together, the documentation describes the requirements with respect to approval, monitoring and review of programmes, external examination, admission of students, student feedback, appointment of staff and staff development, assessment, awards and conferment, as well as ensuring the quality information relating to the programmes and the College.

2.134   The College articulates its commitment to work placements as a means of enhancing the employability of its students through its Higher Education Strategic Plan, its Employability Policy and its Work-Based Learning Policy. The processes for managing work placements are defined within the placement handbook and related web-based guidance, and clarify work placement arrangements, roles and expectations. Programmes also provide tailored work placement guides. Work placement support is provided by the College's Work Placement Team and by programme staff.

2.135   The design of these policies, processes and supporting structures, which enable the College to work with others effectively, would allow the Expectation to be met in design.

2.136   In testing the Expectation the review team considered the details of the partnership arrangement with Liverpool Media Academy, procedures related to work placements, minutes of relevant committees, and relevant quality assurance documentation, and met senior and academic College staff, College students, and a link tutor from the Academy.

2.137   The College undertook a full due diligence process to establish that Liverpool Media Academy was a suitable partner for the College before the programmes successfully underwent the College programme approval process and that of Pearson. The Academy receives at least one quality visit by the College per term, which confirms that agreed procedures are being followed and identified outstanding issues are being addressed. The Academy is subject to the full annual monitoring process of the College, and the partner link tutors produce AMRs, which are fully considered by the College. In addition, the Academy is included in the relevant board of study, and forms part of the College's review process of the subject area (pillar), which reports through the relevant subject management structure in the College.

2.138   The College's HESG has overall responsibility for the academic management of its collaborative programmes and has a comprehensive view of the management of the link with Liverpool Media Academy. The operational oversight is fully exercised through the relevant board of study, which is responsible for the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of academic quality on an ongoing basis.

2.139   In addition, the College provides other support to Liverpool Media Academy, such as curriculum visits, teaching observations and staff development. There is also extensive and supportive interaction between College and Academy students.

2.140   The external examiners have also visited Liverpool Media Academy for enhancement purposes. External examiner reports are available on the Academy's VLE and are accessible via the College VLE. The College and the Academy work closely on programme assessment, and all assessment tasks are scrutinised by the College before approval by Pearson. Assessment work is marked by the Academy, with the College acting as part of the moderation process. College staff attend the assessment boards.

2.141   All Liverpool Media Academy students are issued with a programme student handbook and have access to the College's Higher Education Handbook. Materials for students such as the programme handbook are checked by the relevant College head of faculty, and the Academy follows the College's processes for approving other marketing materials related to the programme. The College's Head of Marketing authorises the web-based publicity for the College programmes.

2.142   The College has ultimate responsibility for the quality of staff that teach on Liverpool Media Academy's programmes, and they were approved during the approval process. It is an expectation, in line with the College policy, that staff must have recognised teaching qualification or be working towards such qualification.

2.143   The supportive relationship with Liverpool Media Academy, which ensures comprehensive oversight of the Pearson-validated provision, is **good practice**.

2.144   The College offers a wide range of work placements as part of its higher education provision and many of the College's higher education programmes require students to undertake work placement so as to reinforce the employability-focused nature of the curriculum, and to meet PSRB requirements.

2.145   Work placement support is provided by the College's Work Placement Team. This support includes advice and assistance to students in the generation of CVs, rehearsing interview skills, providing links to employers, and in general supporting students to gain appropriate placements. A number of programmes also provide support and the curriculum often includes sessions to support students in securing placements, particularly where placement is linked to programme assessment. There is clear evidence of the evaluation and review of work placements so as to enhance the work placement process.

2.146   Students were generally appreciative of the assistance that they receive in securing appropriate and worthwhile placements, and for the ongoing support provided, while employers noted the effectiveness of the College's placement processes in placing appropriate students. The College's arrangements for work placement also receive endorsement from PSRBs.

2.147   The College has effective and secure processes in place to secure the academic standards, and the quality of learning opportunities provided, through partnership with Liverpool Media Academy, which has been highlighted as a feature of good practice. The College also has established mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate and secure work placements for College students, which are monitored and evaluated. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and 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

2.148   The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.150   Of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area all were met with low levels of associated risk. There are six features of good practice in this area and one affirmation.

2.151   There are two features of good practice in Expectation B3. The College has in place an established and systematic peer observation programme that is directly linked to staff development and the sharing of good practice, which is also a notable tenet of enhancement. Enhancement also includes strategic-led initiatives, an example of which is identified by the review team as good practice through the adoption of the flipped classroom model, which was not only well-supported by the College but welcomed by students, and has increased student satisfaction survey outcomes. The model is supported by the extensive use of the College's VLE, which was also another feature of good practice identified in Expectation B4. The College has a strategic approach to the use of online systems and has encouraged their use at programme level through a monitoring and standards system. This College-wide culture of learning technologies has had a positive impact on students' learning experience.

2.152   An important strand of the College's mission and strategy is its link with local employers. As well as having strong relationships with a variety of industry representatives who have direct links to work experience, placement and guest-speaking activities, the review team found that employers have a strong and established collaboration with the College in the design of the curriculum, and inform programme changes where required or needed; this is a feature of good practice in Expectation B4. Students also have input into the curriculum, which is an aspect of the College's responsiveness to the student voice, and is a feature of good practice identified in Expectation B5. Students were positive about the feedback opportunities available and cited examples of curriculum changes as a direct result of student input.

2.153   Positive feedback from students both at the review visit and through their student submission was favourable about the timeliness and quality of feedback assessment students receive. The feedback is regularly scrutinised through a moderation process, which has resulted in a feature of good practice in Expectation B6.

2.154   The feature of good practice identified in Expectation B10 highlights the effective and supportive relationship between the College and the Liverpool Media Academy. Both parties benefit from this relationship, with the experience of quality assurance from the College and the strong industry links evident with the Academy.

2.155   Finally, although periodic review processes had been established for programmes delivered on behalf of the College's awarding bodies through periodic revalidation, the review team affirms that the Higher Education Internal Review has initiated a cyclical periodic review process for all higher education provision (including for Pearson programmes, where such a review had not specifically been in place before).

2.156   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College's Higher Education Public Information Policy defines the College's expectations with respect to publishing information related to the College's higher education provision so as to ensure that the information is accessible, accurate, consistent, complete, trustworthy and fit for purpose.

3.2 Public information concerning higher education provision is provided or checked by College staff through a variety of different systems and methods. Programme information is reviewed annually by the higher education programme leaders, with the process overseen by the curriculum heads of school, following the processes established by the Head of Higher Education. Proposed course information is also shared with the relevant awarding bodies for final approval. For the Pearson programmes, information related to the academic content of programmes is provided by the programme leader, with more general information approved by the Director of Marketing. Information related to the status of awards and their relationship to the awarding bodies follows guidelines included in the Memoranda of Agreement, and such information is generally subject to awarding body approval prior to publication. The College Marketing Team provides the final verification for consistency of published information and uploads programme information onto the College and other websites, such as the UCAS site. The team also produces the College Higher Education Prospectus.

3.3 Data required by external agencies such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England and Higher Education Statistical Agency (including that required for the UNISTATS and UCAS websites) is collated and checked by the College Information Team, supported by the Head of Higher Education and the Higher Education Senior Administrator. Key information data is collated annually in a standardised format. The process is overseen by the Head of Higher Education, supported by the Higher Education Senior Administrator, and is approved by the relevant awarding body. The College has recently reviewed its processes for publishing information so as to ensure compliance with the guidance issued by the Competition and Markets Authority.

3.4 College information is published in a variety of ways, including on the College website, and as printed copy in the form of the College's Higher Education Prospectus and other marketing materials. Information concerning the procedures and regulation related to academic quality and standards is maintained by the Head of Higher Education, and is available on the College's VLE.

3.5 The College has sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure the appropriateness and accuracy of the information it produces about learning opportunities, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.6 The review team tested the College's approach to the Expectation by reviewing information on the College's website and VLE. The review team also considered documentation such as handbooks, prospectuses and policies, and met staff and students.

3.7   The College mission, values and overall strategy are clearly described in the Higher Education Strategy, which is freely available on the College website.

3.8   The College's printed Higher Education Prospectus, and its web-based Higher Education programme information provide clear and accurate information concerning the College's provision and provide extensive information on entry requirements and the programmes of study. The College clearly lays out the process for application and admission on its website, and the relevant policy and procedures are described in the College's Admissions Policy. Processes for application and admission are also described in the Higher Education Prospectus and on the College's website.

3.9   For students on all of its higher education programmes, the College publishes programme and module/unit handbooks that follow a standard College format and contain information relevant to the programme, such as course and module curricula, assessment information, reading lists, links to teaching and learning resources. Handbooks are generally available in printed form and are made available to students on the VLE course pages. The College Higher Education Student Handbook provides links to other useful information such as assessment regulations and the Student Charter, which sets out the expectations on current students and the obligations of the College to the student. The various handbooks were comprehensive, clear and readily available. Students judged the information provided in these documents to be accurate and useful.

3.10   The College issues graduating or leaving students with a full record of academic achievement, which supplements the transcripts and certificates issued by the awarding bodies. The record of academic achievement lists the modules taken, and the credit and grades achieved.

3.11   On its website the College also describes in detail the services, such as workforce development and work placements that the College offers to employers.

3.12   The College sets out a clear framework for managing academic standards and quality in the Higher Education Staff Handbook, which is readily available on the VLE.

3.13   The College has effective processes in place to provide clear, comprehensive and accurate information, and these processes are fully implemented in practice. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.15   The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice.

3.16   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College has an Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Policy that defines enhancement as 'Striving for a continuous improvement and excellence through reflection and critical evaluation of the quality of Higher Education provision that involves staff, students, employers and all stakeholders'.

4.2 The Higher Education Strategy 2015-20 sets out aims to support continuous long term improvement of the quality of higher education provision. To ensure the key expectations relating to enhancement are addressed effectively the College undertakes to collect information systematically to inform the deliberate and strategic enhancement initiatives. Good practice is identified, new initiatives agreed and an implementation plan put in place. The effectiveness and impact of initiatives to support enhancement are measured, monitored and evaluated, and continuously reviewed for improvement.

4.3 The College's approach to enhancement, which includes consideration of the Higher Education Strategy, introduction of enhancement initiatives and dissemination of good practice would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.4 The review team reviewed the claims made in the College documentation and the supporting documentary evidence, and met the College Principal, senior staff, academic and support staff, and students to determine whether the College is taking deliberate and systematic steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

4.5 The College Policy for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning is well established and the HESG has responsibility for the related action plan and enhancement priorities. Based on QAA/HEA guidance and feedback from its key stakeholders, the College identified six enhancement priorities for the period 2014-15 to 2015-16 and produced evidence to support each of the themed priorities. Priorities include online learning, flipped classroom approaches, innovation projects, research activities, the continued development of the teaching and learning environment, and the active involvement of students.

4.6 The VLE has been significantly developed and the College considers it to be its current stand-out success, with 90 per cent usage by the student population and a number of programmes reaching gold standard. Students who met the review team confirmed the value of the VLE as an information source about the College and their programme. Staff confirmed that the VLE has been redesigned and the course format has separate sections for course information, files, assignments and reading lists. The VLE is modern and engaging, with a responsive layout that is usable on all devices. A new additional feature includes higher education course social stream, where students and teachers can share information, such as articles and videos to enhance learning. The team learned that the VLE has been endorsed by JISC and a number of programmes have progressed from bronze status to silver and gold status. This area is identified by the review team as a feature of good practice in Expectation B4.

4.7 Staff confirmed that plagiarism-detection software is effectively used for online submission of assignments and developmental feedback. Independent learning is further supported by flipped classroom approaches based on a common template for schemes of work. Independent learning is encouraged through a College-wide approach to the flipped

classroom model; peer observation confirmed good use of flipped learning. The adoption of this model of teaching across the higher education provision is identified by the review team as an area of good practice in Expectation B3.

4.8   Innovation projects are introduced annually through dedicated funding streams to promote innovative new methods for teaching and assessing across a range of curriculum areas. For example, online software skills development was used for Game Design; Moodle was used as an online formative assessment tool on the Dental Technology programme.

4.9   Supported by a range of HEA initiatives and collaborative university partners, the College has established a range of research initiatives that are primarily focusing on effective teaching and learning and related activities in support of it, including a research day conference, annual student research awards, and research grants for staff. There is a long-established College Research Network that recognises the significance of evidence-based practice in improving teaching and learning.

4.10   The College actively promotes the sharing of research; the establishment of an online portal for research-engaged staff in the College and the wider sector (Research Matters) will enable extended support for the network, with a number of key aims, including facilitating discussion within the College, further education and the wider educational community.

4.11   The Higher Education Review undertaken by the College in 2015 noted that it has worked hard to develop a more distinct higher education identify for its students. The summary of findings of that review states that this should be further strengthened and expanded to continue to meet students' needs for example higher education-specific study areas, library resources, and reliable and accessible IT resources. Staff and students confirmed the progress made on these matters and the investment on the estate, including a higher education common room and the value students and staff experienced through the availability of the VLE.

4.12   The VLE continues to be developed based on student feedback, and the College now has an extended Learning Resource Centre, social space, bespoke inductions, an increased number of e-resources and additional budget.

4.13   The active involvement of students is achieved through student feedback, student surveys and focus group meetings, as well as module/unit feedback and individual tutorials. Changes and most of the initiatives are influenced by student feedback, and students note that staff listen to their views. Students are represented at a number of levels, including boards of study and through focus groups. Training is available for students who take on a student representative role. The review team confirms that the responsiveness of the College to the student voice resulting in positive enhancements to the curriculum is good practice (see Expectation B5).

4.14   The College is moving towards being a practitioner-led, research-informed teaching and learning organisation. As such, the advanced lecturer works as a member of the Quality Improvement Team to improve the quality and organisation of teaching and learning programmes. The Advanced Lecturer contributes to the College's strategic priority to 'continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning so that all learners achieve excellence'.

4.15   The Advanced Lecturer role is proactive in providing support and disseminating excellence to other lecturers, including the facilitation of teaching and learning hours and CPD. The Advanced Lecturer supports the initiatives led by the HESG, including development events and leading on peer observation initiatives.

4.16   Developmental events are made available for staff on a regular basis, in addition to the two-hour weekly session for other CPD activity for staff teaching higher education programmes. A range of activities and initiatives are set within the College's annual equality and diversity calendar, providing a wide range of events and opportunities that firmly establishes a culture of equality and diversity.

4.17   The review team found that employers contributed strong and varied support to the higher education provision, with several companies enjoying longstanding and productive symbiotic relationships with the College. The team heard from employers about the strong engagement with the College and confirmed that the College was responsive and had a curriculum aligned to economic needs, which facilitated the employability of the students.

4.18   Staff and employers confirmed that interactions included: supporting annual student placements; contributing to seminars, lectures or assessment panels for student presentations; providing live briefs for assessments; and engagement with the College's employability support activities such as careers events. Several of the employers also confirmed that they contribute informally to annual reviews of programmes, in particular by advising on vocational aspects of programme developments such as updating laboratories and their equipment.

4.19   The activities and initiatives undertaken for enhancement are student focused and responsive, with a systematic and strategic College-wide approach to enhancement, a strong positive trajectory of progress and maturation of the College's higher education activities since the last QAA review in 2011. The student voice is consistently embedded and fully considered as part of the enhancement process; this was confirmed by staff and students at meetings and in the evidence provided to the team. The strategic approach to enhancing academic quality through systematic, integrated and well-established processes, which continuously improves the student learning experience, is **good practice**.

4.20   The College demonstrates that it is taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities. Staff and students were able to articulate a number of examples of enhancement activities and opportunities being available. The associated monitoring and review processes for continuous improvement is well-embedded to further improve the quality of learning opportunities. The College has demonstrated through its Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Policy that it takes a strategic approach to enhancement. It has an embedded ethos for the continuous development of enhancements for student learning opportunities, and the student voice is strong and valued by the College. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.22   The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations and one area of good practice has been identified.

4.23   To create an enhancement ethos, the College takes a strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities and puts the enhancement agenda at all levels of the higher education communication and management lines. The College introduces deliberate initiatives that support the enhancement ethos of striving for continuous improvement to its higher education provision with a commitment to the enhancement of teaching and learning demonstrated at all levels within the College. The review team found examples of integrated processes driving strategic continuous improvement through the features of good practice identified throughout the review, such as student and employer engagement and teaching and learning practices.

4.24   Through its strategic plan, the College intends to enhance further the quality of its learning opportunities. Student management in this area is widespread and well-supported. Managing the needs of students is a clear focus of the College's strategies and policies.

4.25   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The College's Higher Education Strategy 2015-20 prioritises the development of students' higher level skills for employability, enterprise and economic growth, by working in partnership with leading local employers and relevant professional bodies. The College's Employability and Enterprise Policy details the principles that the College follows to deliver this strategy. These include strong links with employers; employer involvement with provision of careers advice and guidance; embedding of employability within the higher education curriculum; provision of opportunities for work-based learning, placements and internships; development of enterprise and business skills; and professional standards validated by PSRBs.

5.2   Employability is built into the College's induction programme for all higher education students through an introduction to the Employability and Enterprise Support Team, and their role in providing individual support to students, developing their career paths, preparing CVs, securing work experience and searching for employment. The induction presentations end with an initial employability tutorial to alert students to industry requirements, and help students to learn how to assess their own strengths and weaknesses, make themselves more employable, and develop CV and interview skills, and an action plan to achieve employment. Partner universities also contribute to foundation degree programmes through coaching sessions for College students; later on in programmes, College staff and industry partners share their experiences and provide advice on how College graduates can make themselves fit for employability and enterprise.

5.3   Many of the College's teaching staff are actively involved with industry, and the College encourages this involvement, directly supporting it through provision in the staff timetable of three self-directed study days (and a research and scholarship day) each year, as well as remission for industry-related outside work such as external performances for theatre students. The College maintains a large number of industry links covering the full range of interactions, including work placements, internships and work experience, and contributions to taught modules, student employability and careers events. In advance of this review, the College surveyed its panel of employers, and their feedback on their working relationships with the College was uniformly positive, typically described as effective and beneficial both for the students involved and for the employer organisation.

5.4   Employers confirmed that they have maintained close relationships with the College for many years, and in some cases were themselves City of Liverpool College students in the past. Links with College students range from formal placements for one or two students each year to providing short-term work experience and internship opportunities for up to 100 students from a range of courses each year to support local festivals and conferences. Employers meet regularly with programme staff, and actively contribute to planning and delivering updated course content, for example adopting new CADCAM (Computer-Aided Design and Computer-Aided Manufacture) manufacturing techniques for dental technology. Regular contact with employers also enables the College to maintain good market oversight of regional employment opportunities. Employers that the review team met confirmed that the College is very responsive to their input, and works symbiotically with its employer representatives to ensure that its programmes are up to date, meet local and regional employer needs, and produce graduates whose employability and academic qualifications make them immediately productive in industry and business.

5.5   Students confirmed that their courses effectively address employability issues. Programmes typically include taught professional practice modules relevant to the subject areas, and personal tutorials also enable academic staff with relevant industry experience to

help students develop employability, enterprise and independent personal skills, as well as academic skills. Personal tutors also signpost students to additional employability and careers support services provided centrally by the College; extracurricular activities are recorded using the College's student monitoring system, and appear on their academic transcript.

5.6   There is a dedicated employability area on the College VLE, with links to job opportunities and to external employability resource websites. This area of the VLE includes tools for student self-assessment (such as career planning; enterprise and entrepreneurial skills, and self-employment; and psychometric testing), and a section on evaluating career options covering personal qualities, how to make use of your degree, and suggestions of possible employers, both from large national/international companies and smaller local and regional employers. There is also a section with links to help students make themselves more employable through work experience, volunteering part-time work, placements and internships, and advice and tips on how students can present themselves more effectively through their CV, application forms and in interviews.

5.7   The College's work placement team supports students in achieving and undertaking work placements according to the College's higher education guide to work placements, and also delivers a range of employability group events and activities, usually in combination with local employers. More specific advice on placement arrangements associated with different programmes is provided in individual subject placement handbooks; individual placement arrangements are managed through formal learning agreements and reported and assessed through placement reports summarising outcomes. The student submission to this report confirms students' positive view of the wide range of employability activities and support that the College provides, both through its own resources and via its links and contacts with local employers. It highlights the value of embedded course content involving assessment of work-based projects that are realistic and in line with current industry standards, and also co-curricular visits from industry guest speakers and the College's half-day open employability workshop provided by the Learning Factory.

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 30 to 33 of the Higher Education Review handbook.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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