Higher Education Review (Plus) of The Condé Nast Publications Ltd t/a Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design

March 2015

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Plus) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design (the College). The review took place from 17 to 19 March 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Julie Andreshak-Behrman
- Mr Mike Coulson
- Ms Sarah Crook (student reviewer)

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

In Higher Education Review (Plus) the QAA review team:

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

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

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

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

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

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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=106
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Plus):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design.

- The involvement of high calibre industry professionals in the delivery of the programmes which enhances the learning experience (Expectation B3).
- The active encouragement of teaching staff to work as external examiners to broaden their higher education expertise (Expectation B3).
- The use of industry guest speakers in presenting their career histories inspires students to achieve their professional potential (Expectation B4).
- The high quality human, physical and digital resources which promote student employability (Expectation B4).
- The well designed industry projects that develop a wide range of employability skills for students and provide beneficial outcomes for employers (Expectations B6 and B10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design.

By August 2015:

- agree and implement its proposed Learning and Teaching Strategy to ensure a shared understanding of the College's approach to learning and teaching (Expectation B3).

By September 2015:

- strengthen its academic governance so that the operation of committees reflects their terms of reference, is timely, and outcomes are effectively recorded and disseminated (Expectations A2.1, B6 and B8)
- review the terms of reference of committees to ensure appropriate student representation (Expectation B5)
- consistently respond to all formal external examiner reports through the College's deliberative committees (Expectation B7).

By October 2015:

- formalise and implement the proposed process for lesson observations to support staff development (Expectation B3).

By December 2015:

- make effective and consistent use of external reference points in programme monitoring and review (Expectation B8)
- formalise and regularly review information produced for internal and external stakeholders to ensure that it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectation C)
- articulate and formalise the College's approach to disseminating good practice and enhancing student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

By January 2016:

- ensure that the formal process for programme design requires independent external input, includes approval by the College's senior academic committee and is fully recorded (Expectation B1).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The action being taken to formalise the relationship with the external examiner appointed by the College (Expectations A3.4 and B7).

Theme: Student Employability

Student employability is a key strategic objective for the College and it works closely with the fashion and design industry in delivering its programmes. It worked closely with industry partners in designing its programmes, and uses teaching staff with direct and ongoing industry experience to deliver programmes. Students on the Diploma programme undertake mandatory industry projects, working with partners on real business problems and identifying creative solutions. The College has industry-standard software and facilities, with access to specialised archives, which students can use in their learning. Students benefit from one-to-one talent and careers coaching from the College, and are able to use their experience there, alongside the network and contacts they build up, to promote their employability. Students also benefit from frequent guest lectures from high profile and leading figures in the profession who talk about their career paths, which inspires students to develop and achieve their own career goals.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

About Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design

Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design (the College) is a small, specialist higher education provider located in central London. The College is part of Condé Nast International, a pre-eminent upmarket publisher in the fashion industry famous for publishing *Vogue*. Opened in 2013, the College represents the diversification of Condé Nast International into new fields. Its mission is to provide world-class fashion education to the industry's new generation of marketers, stylist, editors, publishers and journalists. It aims to provide fashion education that touches on all areas of the fashion industry, that programmes should be unique and reflect excellence associated with the Condé Nast brand. Fairness, equality and diversity are key objectives, as is a student experience that is continuously enhanced.

The College aims to educate students to the highest industry standards, igniting and nourishing their interest in fashion, and preparing them for professional careers. It has clear expectations of the characteristics, skills and attributes of its graduates. Programmes are vocational, with students working closely with industry experts to learn new skills and apply taught theoretical concepts. The College capitalises on its relationship with other Condé Nast International brands to improve the student experience.

The College recognises a number of challenges. It has yet to apply for a Tier 4 licence to recruit students from overseas and thus far has recruited from the smaller UK and EU market. It acknowledges that students' expectations are high and as such, it has a strategic commitment to an excellent student experience, student success, and student employability.

The College offers two programmes: the Vogue Fashion Certificate and the Vogue Fashion Diploma, validated by Gateway Qualification at level 4. It is considering opportunities to deliver programmes in partnership with degree-awarding bodies up to master's level.

The College has been the subject of reviews by Gateway Qualifications and the British Accreditation Council. This is the College's first QAA review.

Explanation of the findings about Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College's courses, the Vogue Fashion Diploma and Vogue Fashion Certificate, are validated by Gateway Qualifications (GQ). Although the programmes have been designed and written by the College, GQ has overall responsibility for ensuring that programme learning outcomes align to the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Both courses are recognised by Ofqual as awarded at level 4 of the Qualification and Credit Framework.

1.2 The College's Academic Standards Committee monitors the curriculum and programme delivery to ensure the College meets the requirements of the FHEQ and GQ. Although not formally required for the QCF level 4 provision, the College has made broad use of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements in the areas of art and design, business and media, when designing their programmes.

1.3 GQ checks compliance with its regulations and requirements through a programme of visits and other contact by the External Quality Assurer. The External

Quality Assurer visits and provides a thorough formal report on a termly basis. GQ also provides guidance on the programme and assessment requirements for academic staff, including links to the approved learning outcomes for each module.

1.4 The College is responsible for ensuring that staff understand the appropriate level for delivering the courses and how assessment design supports this. It achieves this through an Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook, informal discussions with the Course Director and via the virtual learning environment. Such arrangements allow the expectation to be met in theory.

1.5 The review team tested the expectation through meetings with senior staff and the External Quality Assurer, as well as evaluating academic committee minutes and all External Quality Assurer reports received to date. Academic Standards Committee minutes demonstrate its consideration of the alignment of the curriculum with documentation provided by the awarding organisation, although minutes are relatively brief. The External Quality Assurer reports include a thorough examination of the programmes, including sampling of assignments, to ensure adherence to GQ requirements. The team heard confirmation from senior staff that great care is taken to follow GQ's processes.

1.6 The process for aligning programmes and learning outcomes at the correct levels works well for designing new programmes and is also applied effectively when module revisions are required, with careful liaison between the College and GQ.

1.7 The original programmes, as well as subsequent revisions, have been validated by GQ, which also monitors the College regularly to ensure that academic standards are maintained. The College has arrangements, committees and policies that enable to work within GQ's frameworks. As such, 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

1.8   As its awarding organisation, GQ ensures the College has appropriate systems and processes in place to meet its requirements. It does not prescribe a particular academic framework, but the College has devised an academic framework and regulations which have been approved by GQ through a documentary and centre visit process. The College's assessment regulations are communicated through the academic standards and quality assurance handbook, the student handbook and the College's virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.9   The College's academic governance arrangements are overseen by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and the Examination Board. The ASC is responsible for the development and implementation of policy and procedures relating to the academic quality and standards of all academic provision within the College. The Examination Board is responsible for assessment outcomes and procedures. In addition, the College Committee meets regularly to discuss operational issues. Terms of reference specify the scope and membership for each committee.

1.10   Programme specifications are provided by GQ following programme approval by Ofqual. The College's qualifications have been developed to align with the requirements of the level and credit weighting of each course. The External Quality Assurer visits the College termly to ensure academic standards are maintained and submits a formal report to the Course Director.

1.11   The Course Director produces an annual course monitoring report to inform the College's own quality assurance processes, even though this is not a requirement of the awarding organisation. This provides an overview of the operation, strengths and areas for improvement for all courses. The monitoring reports confirm the programmes are delivered according to the curriculum and lectures and assessment covers all learning outcomes, mapped to each unit. The College's committee arrangements, regulations and processes allow the expectation to be met in theory.

1.12   The expectation was tested through scrutiny of programme-related documentation, committee minutes and the annual course monitoring report, as well as meetings with senior staff and the External Quality Assurer. The documentation demonstrated a close alignment of the curriculum with awarding organisation's regulations, as well as regular monitoring of standards by the External Quality Assurer, whose reports include sampling of assessments to ensure ongoing adherence to GQ's academic requirements. ASC and examination board minutes demonstrate the operation of the College's academic framework.

1.13   The External Quality Assurer reports include a thorough examination of the College's assessment practice to confirm that standards are maintained, and contain an assessment of risk as well as comments and recommendations. Although these are considered informally by senior staff, there is little formal consideration by ASC

under the terms of reference. Minutes of meetings, which in some cases contain little detail, indicate that each committee operates independently and that the flow of information between them is limited. Student representation on the ASC and attendance by the External Quality Assurer and external examiner at formal meetings is not yet fully embedded. Senior staff acknowledged the need to review the timeliness of the meetings to allow students and external examiners to attend, as well as facilitating the flow of information between deliberative bodies. The review team **recommends** that the College strengthen its academic governance so that the operation of committees reflects their terms of reference, is timely, and outcomes are effectively recorded and disseminated by September 2015.

1.14   The College has regulations and an academic framework in place, with regular monitoring of standards by the awarding organisation. The College's academic committee structure is in operation, although the need to review its timeliness and full adherence to terms of reference is recognised by senior staff. Such changes would not require any major structural changes and as such the associated level of risk is low. In light of the College's arrangements for governing academic standards, the review team concludes that it meets this expectation.

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

1.15   Responsibility for setting and monitoring definitive programme documents lies with the awarding organisation but the College takes responsibility for ensuring that these are available on its website as programmes specifications including intended learning outcomes.

1.16   Information about courses and modules is made available online and in the College prospectus. Learning outcomes for each unit are found within project briefs. The College examines programme records and documentation as a part of its quality assurance processes in its relationship with its awarding organisation, Gateway Qualifications. The College's academic regulations describe how programme specifications should be used.

1.17   The College's approach to meeting this expectation, its arrangements for providing, using and maintaining programme specifications, are sufficiently robust to allow the expectation to be met in theory.

1.18   The review team tested the procedures by examining student handbooks, project briefs, course specifications, and in meetings staff. It also scrutinised the VLE to determine ways in which definitive information was communicated to students.

1.19   Course information is made available to students and prospective students through the College's website and further information about assessment is available through the VLE. Information about individual module assessment aims and learning outcomes is made available through unit and assessment briefs. The College also provides a detailed breakdown of knowledge and skills that the student must evidence, tailored to pass the individual module.

1.20   The review team found evidence that course specifications were used in course self-evaluation processes, and are available to staff through the College VLE and in hard copy. Staff make active use of specifications in their teaching and during annual monitoring processes.

1.21   The team heard from College staff that when a problem was identified with a module it was discussed internally with the teaching staff before changes are made to the module that are approved by the awarding organisation.

1.22   The College's self-evaluation processes, external examiners' reports, and the process of review by its awarding organisation ensure that programme information is maintained as a reference point for delivery and assessment of the programmes. In meetings with the College's External Quality Assurer the review team heard that the College makes use of specifications and that learning outcomes are reliably communicated. Students the team met had examined the programme specification prior to application and had made use of the specification during their

studies. The review team examined project briefs and found that these contain robust and appropriate information about expected outcomes and the assessment criteria.

1.23 The review team concluded the expectation is met with low associated level of risk because the College has arrangement to manage its definitive programme records, uses them assiduously, and effectively delivers programmes against them.

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

1.24   The College's Diploma and Certificate are located at level 4 on the QCF as vocational-focused Education and Training qualifications. The design and approval of units, programmes and qualifications is subject to Gateway Qualifications' (GQ) approval process. It expects the College, as a 'Recognised Centre', to have quality management systems in place to underpin delivery. It permits these systems to vary according to what is appropriate to the College's context, but stipulates that these systems must be effectively implemented.

1.25   The College's Academic Quality Assurance Handbook provides a procedure for the design and approval of modules. It requires the development of a business case for all new programmes, with appropriate involvement from the Senior Executive Team and other managers regarding the programme and module specifications, and that the Quality Code is taken into account.

1.26   The College has appointed an external examiner in addition to GQ's External Quality Assurer. It uses their comments to formulate actions to improve and enhance the provision. While the College formally adheres to the pass/fail requirements of the awarding organisation, it also uses a merit grade informally to give an indication of high-achieving students. Regular visits from the External Quality Assurer monitors grades, and checks quality on behalf of Gateway Qualifications.

1.27   The College designed the current qualifications in close cooperation with Gateway Qualifications in order to meet its detailed requirements for the design of units and qualifications. In addition, the College informally engages with industry professionals and Condé Nast Publications to create industry-relevant, vocational, fashion-business awards. Seeking to capitalise on a gap in the market, the College's qualifications aim to prepare students for the fashion industry from a practical and business-orientated perspective. Based on the close working arrangements between the College and the awarding organisation, and its status as a Recognised Centre, the College meets the expectation in theory.

1.28   To test the expectation, the review team analysed documents such as the External Quality Assurer and external examiner reports, and the Academic Quality Assurance Handbook. The team met senior staff to ascertain how it worked with Gateway Qualifications at each stage of the approval process.

1.29   Although the College has intentions to further develop its portfolio of awards, at the time of the review the College was not in the process of developing new programmes. External examiner comments recorded in minutes of the Academic Standards Committee indicate that, in their opinion, the standard of programmes exceeds the threshold requirements for level 4. The Gateway External Quality Assurer consistently indicates that the College is meeting its requirements of the awarding organisation and is supportive of its delivery and provision. The College now has a written procedure for the internal approval of new awards.

1.30   The review team concludes that the College's responsibilities to the awarding organisation, associated with design and approval of programmes at the appropriate level, are secure. In addition, the College has procedures for the design of programmes that take account of the Quality Code. The team therefore concludes this Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

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

1.31 Students taking the Vogue Fashion Foundation Diploma are assessed by a combination of course work projects, written assignments, oral presentations and/or a detailed and comprehensive final project proposal. This provides students an opportunity to create a portfolio, or enhance a current portfolio, for their future studies and career. Assessment of the Vogue Fashion Certificate is by coursework and projects.

1.32 The course team assess students against course and unit learning outcomes. The Examination Board scrutinises individual student assessment outcomes and accurately records marks in accordance with GQ's requirements. The College maintains academic standards through their assessment procedures which include internal verification of assignment briefs and double marking.

1.33 In conjunction with these procedures, the External Quality Assurer visits regularly to ensure the College's quality assurance and management procedures, systems, and policies enable students to achieve threshold academic standards. They also sample assessed work to ascertain whether threshold and GQ's own academic standards have been achieved. The expectation is met in theory because the College has the systems to manage assessments as required by GQ.

1.34 The review team met senior staff, the External Quality Assurer and reviewed their reports, external examiner reports, and Examination Board and Academic Standards Committee minutes.

1.35 The College's Academic Standards Committee confirms whether students have satisfied both threshold standards and GQ's own academic standards. It also confirms whether credit and qualifications can be awarded, that is, when students' achievement is demonstrated through assessment and confirmed by the External Quality Assurer.

1.36 The External Quality Assurer indicates a strong satisfaction with the College's internal quality processes during assessment as does the College-appointed external examiner. The course leader directs the process of internal verification and double-marking of assessments and this is consistently practiced.

1.37 GQ is satisfied that the College's processes and provision adequately uphold the achievement of learning outcomes, threshold standards and GQ's own academic standards. The College works effectively with GQ to assess students and in addition is subject to the additional scrutiny of the College-appointed external

examiner. As such, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): 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

1.38   The College has designed units and programmes in consultation with, and validated by GQ. The External Quality Assurer visits regularly to assess quality, standards, and view students' work to appraise the assessment of learning outcomes.

1.39   GQ requires the College to have a quality management system which provides 'efficient recording and evaluation' of provision. The College has a process of Annual Quality Monitoring specified in its Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook. Monitoring reports are considered by the Academic Standard Committee to evaluate, among other objectives, the extent to which intended learning outcomes are being met and attained by students, and the effectiveness of the curriculum in relation to learning outcomes. Monitoring reports also reflect on External Quality Assurer's reports. Both the College's and GQ's monitoring arrangements consider academic standards and as such the expectation is met in theory.

1.40   The review team tested the Expectation via a meeting with the External Quality Assurer and staff, discussion with staff on programme monitoring reviewed reports from externals and the College.

1.41   The External Quality Assurer's reports regularly affirm that the College is maintaining the expected academic standards and express satisfaction with the College's assessment and monitoring processes. Where the External Quality Assurer has identified actions, the College responds swiftly. The College-appointed external examiner reports positively on the assessment of learning outcomes and level of awards.

1.42   The College's annual monitoring report confirms that the programme team annually evaluate the delivery of the programme against the learning outcomes, and comment on their continuing relevance. These reports also provide a response to the external examiner's comments. The College has only produced one annual monitoring report since programmes are relatively new, which was considered by Academic Standards Committee. This report was only considered internally; GQ does not require the report and it was not supplied.

1.43   The College meets the requirements of GQ, and the review team concludes that monitoring and review of programmes is conducted effectively and addresses UK threshold standards and the academic standards of GQ. As such, 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

1.44   The College uses external expertise to assist in the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of the programmes it offers. The External Quality Assurer visits regularly to evaluate the College's quality assurance arrangements and sample assessments. They advise on the design of programmes and arrange their approval through GQ. The College also obtains informal independent advice from industry professionals on the design of its programmes.

1.45   Although not a requirement of the awarding organisation, the College has appointed an appropriately qualified and experienced external examiner to scrutinise its courses, assist in maintaining standards, and advise on the alignment of courses with threshold standards and those of GQ. Their recommendations feed into action plans within the annual course monitoring report. In addition, the Examination Board terms of reference allow for input from both the College-appointed external examiner and the External Quality Assurer.

1.46   The arrangements for external input in the design of programmes, assessment, and programme monitoring allow the expectation to be met in theory. The review team tested the expectation through meetings with senior staff and the External Quality Assurer, as well as scrutiny of the Academic Standards Committee minutes, Examination Board minutes, the external examiner's formal reports and External Quality Assurer reports.

1.47   Minutes show the external examiner was present at the first meeting of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and delivered a verbal report. A brief written report was provided subsequently, although this lacks detail to inform the College's further improvements. The same meeting of the ASC also reported briefly on the first two written reports received from the External Quality Assurer. However, there was no input from any external source, or deliberation of further written reports subsequently received, at the next meeting of this committee.

1.48   Although the terms of reference for the Examination Board allow for the external examiner to be present, neither the external examiner nor the External Quality Assurer have been invited to or attended any meetings.

1.49   The External Quality Assurer provides regular formal reports following monitoring visits to the College. While some of these are briefly reported on within ASC, senior staff are aware that deliberation is not formally recorded.

1.50 The College has taken additional steps over and above GQ requirements to integrate externality within the academic oversight of the programmes. Feedback from the College-appointed external examiner has identified that some aspects of the course could be revised to further align with current industry standards. However, issues over the submission of their written report and the lack of detail in it have resulted in the external examiner's input not being as rigorous as originally intended.

1.51 In order to increase the impact of external input on the programmes, senior staff aim to strengthen and further formalise the relationship with the College-appointed external examiner. The College has started the process of producing a formal guide for the external examiner to improve their understanding of the courses and the College's expectations. The review team **affirms** the action being taken to formalise the relationship with the external examiner appointed by the College.

1.52 The College uses independent expertise from the external examiner and External Quality Assurer in setting and maintaining academic standards, according to its own and GQ's processes. As such, the expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low as the affirmation reflects the completion of activity already underway to formalise the relationship with the external examiner, which will allow the College to meet the expectation more fully.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.53   In reaching its judgement on the College's maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of GQ, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.54   The College's awarding organisation, GQ, is responsible for setting academic standards and it articulates the College's responsibilities for maintaining both its own and threshold academic standards. Both the College and GQ have procedures for managing these responsibilities and the College participates and supports GQ's processes, for example, for maintaining definitive programme records. The College takes account of appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements, has secure arrangements for assessing learning outcomes and has multiple externals contributing to the maintenance of academic standards.

1.55   The review team found that all Expectations are met and the risk for each area is low. It makes one recommendation in relation to the governance of academic standards. It affirms the action the College is taking to formalise relationships with the external examiner appointed by the College.

1.56   The review team concludes that the College's maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of its awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The programme design process takes place within the College and is subject to approval by GQ. Applicable Subject Benchmark Statements have been used in the design process, and the approved programmes are unique to the College.

2.2 The College's Academic Standards Committee is responsible for maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. According to the Committee's terms of reference, it is also responsible for setting the requirements for approval, and scrutinising and ratifying programme approvals. The Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook refers to the process for programme approval, but does not reflect the Academic Standards Committee's role in this. Instead it advises that in the event of new programme development and approval, a panel from GQ, including externals, would visit to assess learning resources and facilities for the course, and evaluate curriculum design, content, and assessment arrangements.

2.3 The review team noted that the Handbook refers frequently to terms such as 'validating university' and 'university partner', the 'field of management', 'modules' (whereas the College and awarding organisation use 'unit'), and also refers to a 'Dean' and 'programme committee'. The College produced a revised version of the Handbook aimed at addressing these issues and more accurately reflecting the College's context although it remains in a draft format. This finding supports the recommendation in section C, paragraph 3.7.

2.4 The Academic Standards Committee and the approval process means the College meets the expectation in theory. The review team explored the expectation through scrutiny of the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook, the Academic Standards Committee's terms of reference, and in meetings with College staff.

2.5 The Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook advises that that new programmes will be scrutinised by the Principal, Vice Principal and Academic Registrar to ensure the conformity to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The Handbook reproduces text from the Quality Code, but does not explain how the College would apply it in practice during programme design, development and approval.

2.6 The process for designing and approving programmes postdates the existing courses that the College designed with GQ. The current programmes were designed with a strong emphasis on links with the fashion industry, including informal contact with many fashion houses and relevant visiting speakers. The External

Quality Assurer and external examiner indicate that programmes are well designed and well placed within the industry. However, the design process at the College for these programmes was not clearly and consistently documented. The review team **recommends** that the College ensures that the formal process for programme design includes independent external input, includes approval by the College's senior academic committee, and is fully recorded by January 2016.

2.7   The stated role of the Academic Standards Committee, and the approval process outlined in the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook point to a more effective practice which has not yet been used for designing programmes. In addition, the College is revising the handbook to address the errors within it. These arrangements mean that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is moderate because of the lack of fully documented process to date, and of formal external input in programme design, indicates that insufficient emphasis or priority is given to assuring quality.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.8   The College manages admissions to its programmes. Information about the applications procedure is available on the College's website and through its prospectus. Students apply through an online admissions form which asks them for their educational history, reasons for applying, and personal details, but also leads to stage two of the admissions process in which students are invited by the admissions tutor to undertake a research and writing task, designed to test the applicants' aptitude for study. Applicants are then invited for an interview with a member of academic staff before they are notified of the application decision. Students for whom English is a second language are required to provide details of their English language qualifications.

2.9   The College ensures consistency by providing staff with a set of standardised questions for interviews. The College does not have any minimum requirements for entry to the courses, although it does consider students' preparedness for the course. Financial information about fees and studentships are available through the website. The College's admissions process falls within its non-discrimination policy.

2.10   Admissions, selection and recruitment procedures are overseen and monitored in the College and data is discussed at the Academic Standards Committee. The process and senior oversight means the College meets the Expectation in theory.

2.11   The review team examined the operation of the admissions procedure in meetings with students, senior and support staff, and by scrutinising documentation relating to admissions.

2.12   The team found that materials provided outlined the mutual expectations and responsibilities of the College and students, as well as assessment techniques and that this provided an effective basis for induction. The team also viewed the College's welcome activities for students and found that these offered a comprehensive introduction to the College. Students the team met reported that they were given suitable information about assessment, expectations, and policies and procedures upon induction and felt supported and informed through the application and interview process.

2.13   In order to identify areas in need of improvement the College gathers student views of the pre-arrival and induction procedures through a mid-course survey. The review team examined the results of this feedback and found that it reflected a positive student experience for students. The team heard that the application and interview process was under constant review.

2.14   Senior staff clarified that the Vice Principal takes responsibility for interviewing students prior to admission, and for some students this might be via

video link. Students the team met had all been interviewed by the Vice Principal and reported that this had been a useful and mutually productive experience. The College has an interview response form that gives staff the opportunity to identify any additional support the applicant may require. All the students the team met consistently reported that they had an opportunity to raise any additional learning needs upon application and that this had resulted in extra support for those that needed it. The College has an Admissions Officer who liaises closely with prospective applicants.

2.15   The College allows students to appeal an application decision by writing to the admissions panel and requesting a review of their application. This review is conducted by a second admissions panel, consisting of different staff members who come to a decision. Applications data is discussed at College Committee.

2.16   The College's recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admissions. The College supports students by offering a good experience at initial application and admission stage and by offering appropriate support to those students who need it. Information to prospective students is available and was found by students the review team met to be robust. The team concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.17   There is a clear Strategic Plan to develop the College, which includes 'ensuring that the student experience is paramount', and aims to continuously enhancing that experience. It commits to the use of student feedback to inform improvement, and aims to promote fairness, equality and diversity within the College. The College has identified the need for a formal learning and teaching strategy to articulate current practice and provide a framework for quality improvement, and has included this in a College action plan.

2.18   New teaching staff receive a thorough induction and are issued with a copy of the quality assurance manual, College policies and programme specifications, as well as access to the virtual learning environment.

2.19   Co-teaching is common practice in the College, and there are informal peer lesson observations with staff receiving verbal feedback on their lessons, but these are informally arranged and recorded. Informal lesson observation is embedded within the culture of the College and the Principal sits in on a number of lectures, although good practice and areas for development are not formally recorded. Senior staff recognise the need for a formal lesson observation process and have included this in the College action plan.

2.20   As the staff team is relatively small, good practice is shared informally within the academic team. Staff are able to ask each other for advice and discuss individual students' needs with a view to maximising learning opportunities for that person.

2.21   There is a regular formal staff appraisal system in operation. Staff report that they are able to identify training needs and development opportunities, and receive positive support from the College. The College does not currently have a formal staff development policy, but considers staff applications for development on an individual merit basis. Two academic staff are being supported to take further qualifications, one teacher is currently seeking appointment as an external examiner, and relevant professional training has been provided for support staff. The College action plan commits to the production of a formal staff development policy and structured development opportunities.

2.22   Two members of the teaching team currently act as external examiners for other higher education providers. This allows staff to broaden and develop their experience of higher education practice. The teaching curriculum for both courses includes a high level of input from visiting industry professionals, to ensure students are familiar with current industry practice as well as providing potential employment opportunities. Student feedback is used to inform the selection of future speakers.

2.23   The College uses student feedback to improve the provision of learning opportunities. Students take surveys each term for both the Certificate and Diploma courses and staff are given a summary of student survey results during staff

meetings. In addition, there is a Student Steering Group comprising three students from each course, for which students are given a verbal briefing to prepare them for their responsibilities. The Student Steering Group meets termly and the College has recently started distributing minutes to all students, although not all students are aware of this.

2.24   The arrangements for learning and teaching, which include teacher inductions, appraisals, professional development, and input from external speakers allows the expectation to be met in theory. The team tested the expectation through meetings with senior staff, teachers, support staff and students, and considered meeting minutes, staff development activities and policies, and staff recruitment polices.

2.25   Students speak highly of the quality and variety of teaching and greatly appreciate the industry relevance of the courses. The College has an open-door policy and students are able to approach staff with queries, comments or concerns.

2.26   While there is sufficient documentation available to teachers to enable them to carry out their roles, the College recognises that it lacks a written learning and teaching strategy to provide coherent information on planned improvements. The team **recommends** that the College agree and implement its proposed Learning and Teaching Strategy to ensure a shared understanding of the College's approach to learning and teaching by August 2015.

2.27   Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced, and are current practitioners in the fashion industry. Programme delivery benefits from their experience and current examples. Visiting speakers from the fashion industry, a number of whom are high-profile names, are brought in to enhance the teaching. The involvement of high calibre industry professionals in the delivery of the programmes which enhances the learning experience is **good practice**.

2.28   Two members of teaching staff act as external examiners at other higher education institutions and a third person is seeking a similar appointment. The active encouragement of teaching staff to work as external examiners to broaden their higher education experience is **good practice**.

2.29   The College places high importance on feedback from students and has effective arrangements in place to regularly obtain student views on their learning opportunities and the quality of provision. This feedback is used to improve teaching, resources, and the overall student learning experience. For example, following students' suggestions, the College installed a photography studio which is extremely popular with students as it enhances their learning experience.

2.30   Lesson observations take place informally although the College has arrangements to formally observe one member of staff as part of their learning towards a teaching qualification. Without wider, formal lesson observations there is no formal system to identify and act upon elements of good practice in teaching or areas for individual development. The team **recommends** the College formalises and implements the proposed process for lesson observations to support staff development by October 2015.

2.31   The expectation is met, as there are arrangements in place for systematic review and improvement of the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, and students are enabled to develop as independent learners. In particular, the involvement of industry professionals in teaching programmes allows students to study their subject in-depth in a professionally relevant manner. The

associated level of risk is low, as the recommendations relate to activity already underway in a small number of areas will allow the provider to meet the expectation more fully.

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

2.32   Preparing learners to work in the fashion industry is an important part of the College's provision. Well qualified and experienced visiting lecturers from the industry are a vital part of the teaching timetable and students are provided with a number of opportunities to gain experience from fashion houses, galleries and exhibitions. Teaching staff are also current practitioners in the fashion industry.

2.33   Although students are not assigned a personal tutor, staff are readily available for tutorials on request. Students receive developmental feedback on their assignments and can discuss this with staff on a one-to-one basis, which they find very helpful in improving their learning. In addition, students receive careers tutorials from experienced and well-connected staff to explore potential roles within the fashion industry.

2.34   The College carries out a detailed needs assessment of students who declare additional learning needs during the application process. These students are provided with additional, regular, focused tutorial support from qualified staff, which they find extremely supportive.

2.35   The College has taken highly effective steps to provide relevant learning resources that reflect current industry standards. These include a library containing all necessary course materials and an IT suite with industry-standard design software, which the College has recently upgraded in line with the external examiner's recommendations In addition, the photography studio allows students to engage in practical aspects of fashion communication. Students also have access to the USA Vogue archive as a further resource.

2.36   As part of the curriculum, students are given a tour of the Vogue UK offices, which includes short interviews with Vogue personnel. This gives students the opportunity to discover more details about different careers within Condé Nast Publications and the skills and experience they need for those roles.

2.37   The College's arrangements for enabling student development and achievement, including careers tutorials, additional learning support, and resources for learning, allow the expectation to be met in theory. The team tested the expectation through meetings with senior and support staff, teachers, and students, as well as considering the student submission submitted for this review, student handbooks, course evaluation reports, committee minutes, External Quality Assurer reports, and staff CVs.

2.38   The arrangements that the College has put in place are extremely effective in enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The External Quality Assurer cites the connection to industry and the quality of visiting speakers as areas of strength. Student surveys indicate that this aligns with the majority of student views.

2.39   Teachers are provided with helpful written guidance on providing feedback to students. Students confirm that the developmental feedback on their assignments and one-to-one feedback is helpful to improve their learning and identifies strengths and areas for improvement in their work and indicates what they need to do to achieve a higher grade. Students greatly appreciate the learning resources which improve their industry relevance and employability. Students recognise the College VLE as a valuable learning resource containing lecture notes, assignment briefs and other relevant programme items such as class materials and programme handbooks. Students find career tutorials inspiring and helpful in identifying their future career path. The College is in the process of seeking additional staff to further strengthen this area.

2.40   College staff make effective use of the industry contacts to procure a wide range of visiting lecturers within the curriculum. An interview-style presentation allows the guests to explain their career path, which students find highly motivational in setting their goals for future employment. The use of industry guest speakers in presenting their career histories inspires students to achieve their professional potential and is **good practice**.

2.41   The College has made considerable effort to ensure that learning resources are appropriate and comparable with current industry use, particularly in technology. Students find that this allows them to produce high-quality assignments on industry-standard software at a level expected in the fashion industry. The photography studio is a popular resource, giving students a helpful perspective on industry requirements and bringing their learning to life. The high quality human, physical and digital resources, which promote student employability is **good practice**.

2.42   The expectation is met, as the College effective arrangements and practices for enabling students to develop their potential and inspire them to achieve their future goals. The associated level of risk is low as no issues have been identified by the team.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.43   The College has a number of mechanisms in place to monitor the student voice, including Student Steering Group and through student experience surveys. The College also has a student representative system. The Academic Standards Committee's terms of reference include student representatives and the College has a Student Experience Group, which includes elected students from each programme, the Vice Principal, a member of academic staff, and is chaired by the Registrar.

2.44   The College's Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook communicates to staff the College's mechanisms for engaging students with the quality assurance procedures, via course team meetings, surveys and student representatives. It outlines the role of student representatives and encourages them to meet course leaders at least once each term.

2.45   These policies and procedures enable the College to meet the Expectation in theory. The team explored this expectation in meetings with students, teaching staff, and evaluated documentary evidence, including minutes of meetings.

2.46   The review team examined documentation relating to the College's discussion of student feedback at the Academic Standards Committee and found that this offered good opportunities for communication and for students to raise issues. Student feedback from the Student Steering Group, the end-of-term and the end-of-year surveys, are made available to staff informally, with subsequent discussion occurring at committee level.

2.47   The team scrutinised the mechanisms by which the College gathers the student voice, including through questionnaires and surveys. They report a high level of satisfaction with the resources and support offered at the College. The team noted that the issue of employability had been raised by students and heard at the review visit from both staff and students that employability was now embedded in the programmes and in the ethos of the College. The College develops action points from student survey feedback and looks for common themes for development and good practice.

2.48   The team heard from teaching staff, professional support staff, senior staff and students that the College and students have an effective working relationship. The Student Steering Group offers a regular and effective means for students to raise issues with the College, and for the College to communicate with the student body. The VLE provides students with information about the Student Steering Group, minutes of meetings, and how to get involved. An example of one of the issues raised at the Group, and acted on was a request for earlier support for preparing CVs.

2.49   Student representatives are asked to nominate themselves and are then prepared for their role through informal verbal discussion. Student representatives were satisfied that they had been adequately prepared for their role.

2.50   The Academic Standards Committee terms of reference include student representation. At the time of the review visit, the Academic Standards Committee

had met twice, with student representation from one student representative at the second of the two meetings. This discrepancy was explained by the College as possibly due to the timing of the meeting in the academic year. The minutes of the College Committee scrutinised by the team did not include student representation, and staff confirmed in meetings with the team that student attendance was not expected at this level. The review team **recommends** that the College review the terms of reference of committees to ensure appropriate student representation by September 2015.

2.51   The College has effective arrangements to gather and respond to students' views. The student representative system works well and student feedback is discussed at committee level. Notwithstanding the recommendation in this area, the team concludes the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because the recommendation relates to the completion of activity to expand student representation that is already underway.

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

2.52   Students taking the Vogue Fashion Foundation Diploma are assessed by a combination of coursework projects, written assignments, oral presentations and/or a detailed and comprehensive final project proposal. This provides students with an opportunity to create a portfolio or enhance a current portfolio for their future studies and career. Assessment of the Vogue Fashion Certificate is by coursework and projects.

2.53   Although GQ only requires pass or fail assessment outcomes, the College uses pass/merit/distinction outcomes internally to identify high-achieving students. The implementation of the internal criteria was in response to feedback from students wishing to gain further detail about their achievement and final marks. Feedback to students is both formative and summative. Written, oral and recorded feedback enables students to prepare for future assessments and improve their performance.

2.54   The Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook informs staff of the expectations, purposes and procedures around assessment. The academic team undertakes internal moderation of student work for each unit to ensure consistency in marking and achievement of learning outcomes, and in accordance with the moderation process described in the Handbook.

2.55   Examination Board terms of reference state that the Board's role is to determine progression and/or outcomes of student assessment and to make awards. The terms note that the external examiner attends by invitation only.

2.56   The Student Handbooks set out the College's approach to and expectations of assessment and feedback as well as policies, procedures and regulations. It is available to students on the VLE along with assessment briefs. The Handbook clearly sets out expectations of student conduct in the assessment process, including defining academic misconduct and associated consequences. The College has had no academic misconduct cases to date and has procedures to investigate cases and refer consideration to the Examination Board.

2.57   GQ encourages the recognition of prior learning as an assessment method to award credit. It does not require entrants to possess any qualifications; however, the College requires secondary school or further education qualifications for the Diploma course but also is open to applicants who do not have this academic background. It also has an emphasis in admission processes on the appropriateness of the course for the student's career aspirations and their aptitude for the subject. The College does not have a formal process for the accreditation of prior learning although it is within the remit of the Examination Board to make decisions on whether accreditation should be awarded.

2.58   The College facilitates and supports assessment for students with additional learning needs to ensure appropriate and reasonable adjustments are in place and provide equality of opportunity. It encourages discussion of accommodations for assessments for students with additional learning needs from the earliest stages.

2.59   The College, in theory, has processes to ensure fair and valid assessments that enable it to meet the expectation. The review team tested the Expectation in meetings with staff and students, the External Quality Assurer, employers, and by reviewing external reports, meeting minutes and the annual monitoring reports.

2.60   External Quality Assurer's reports indicate strong satisfaction with the assessment process used in the College, including the operation of internal verification arrangements in accordance with the requirements of GQ. Marking and moderation is conducted in accordance with the learning outcomes of the validated document of GQ. The College has elected to appoint an external examiner whose reports affirm the processes and outcomes of assessment at the College

2.61   Despite their inclusion in the terms of reference, the external examiner has not attended an Examination Board meeting to date. The minutes do not reflect any detail of discussion; the College informed the review team that no particular issues have arisen for discussion.

2.62   The Examination Board minutes lack sufficient detail to ascertain clearly if the remit of the Board as described in the Academic Quality Assurance Handbook is being met in full, particularly given the absence of the external examiner at the Exam Board meeting. Similarly, the Academic Standards Committee meeting minutes are unclear in demonstrating a thorough approach to verification. These findings support the recommendation in section A, paragraph 1.13.

2.63   In the April 2014 cohort, the Examination Board minutes record a substantial proportion of students who were provided a retrieval of mark. The College reviewed and revised the unit in question based on the academic team's identification of a need to adjust the learning outcomes to ensure their industry relevance and reflect the overall aims of the award prior to GQ providing unit re-approval. Student feedback was also taken into account in making minor adjustments to the unit.

2.64   Meetings with students confirmed that they are aware of what was expected of them for assessed work and that information on assessment was accessible and timely. Students at the College find the feedback they receive is specific, helpful and is received in a timely fashion and prior to the submission of the next piece of work. They appreciate the introduction internally of assessment outcomes that include distinctions for enabling them to fully understand the quality of their work. They confirm that the approach to additional learning support in relation to assessment is highly proactive and effective.

2.65   Diploma students also receive comprehensive and valuable feedback from professionals in the field to whom they present their industry projects. For these projects, students received briefs from several fashion-related businesses who assign them genuine challenges faced by their business which they must research and present approaches to overcoming that challenge. Employers involved in the project were highly impressed with the quality of the project results and the readiness of the students for the world of fashion. The projects also represents a real opportunity for the employers to get a fresh and outside perspective on their businesses. For the students, their Industry Project is a major highlight of the course: it is rigorous and appropriately challenging. The engagement with their project allows students to further their understanding of the industry and their chosen pathway in it. Students remarked that they felt and were treated as professionals in the field, in general with respect to their participation on the course but also with specific regard to this project. The well designed industry projects that develop a wide range of employability skills and provide beneficial outcomes for employers are **good practice**.

2.66   The Annual Monitoring reports prepared by the Course Director and team include evaluation of assessment practice and are informed by students' feedback on their

experience of assessment. Students remark positively on the transparency of the assessment process. The External Quality Assurer and the external examiner are satisfied that the assessment process meets requirements. The Industry Project is further evidence of the effectiveness of the College's assessment practices.

2.67   Having reviewed the documentation on assessment and met students, staff and the External Quality Assurer, the team determines that assessment at the College is equitable, valid and reliable, including for the recognition of prior learning, to enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. Therefore, 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

2.68   GQ provides an External Quality Assurer to check internal quality assurance processes. The External Quality Assurer visits the College after the end of every programme to provide a rigorous audit and formal report of College processes, policies and student work. They provide a verbal summary of their visit to the Course Director in the first instance, followed by a formal written report.

2.69   Although not required by GQ, the College has chosen to appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced external examiner to critique the College's courses and provide suggestions for further improvement and enhancement. The appointment process was informal, involving approaches to suitable contacts in the fashion sector. Terms of reference for Examination Boards allow for the external examiner to be present by invitation and the External Quality Assurer to be present 'via review' (that is, through review of their reports). However, minutes of the Examination Boards do not indicate any detailed consideration of External Quality Assurer reports, and the External Quality Assurer confirmed that they do not receive minutes of formal committee meetings.

2.70   As the College receives reports from both the External Quality Assurer and its own appointed external examiner, the expectation is met in theory. The team tested the expectation through meetings with the External Quality Assurer, senior staff, and students, as well as scrutiny of committee meeting minutes and External Quality Assurer and external examiner reports.

2.71   The annual course monitoring and evaluation report includes a verbal report from the external examiner, plus a recommendation to further develop digital aspects of the course. There is a process in operation for making use of External Quality Assurer and external examiner reports, although it is currently implemented by senior staff without detailed consideration or recording by any formal academic committee.

2.72   External Quality Assurer reports are particularly positive, especially regarding the level of the course and internal moderation processes, but also contain suggestions for improvement and highlight areas of good practice as well as potential risks. Students were not aware of any external reports, although one External Quality Assurer report is available on the College website.

2.73   Minutes of Examination Boards show that the External Quality Assurer has not attended a meeting. In meetings, senior staff indicated that verbal External Quality Assurer reports are considered at Examination Boards, although meeting minutes contain little detail apart from either acknowledging their visit or stating that the report's recommendations were addressed but without describing the recommendations. Minutes of the first meeting of the Academic Standards Committee refer briefly to the two reports received shortly after the courses commenced and noting that recommendations had been addressed, reporting no details as the nature of the recommendation. There is no other formal deliberation of these reports by College committees, and senior staff recognise this could improve.

2.74   The external examiner attended one Academic Standards Committee and delivered a brief verbal report. Their written report was received considerably later and is brief, with little detailed text. The external examiner has not attended any meeting of the Examination Board. There is no evidence of formal deliberation of written external examiner reports by

any College committee. The team **recommends** that the College consistently responds to all formal external examiner reports through the College's deliberative committees by September 2015.

2.75   The College has recognised some of the weaknesses in its previous informal approach to appointing an external examiner and is taking steps to formalise this relationship. It is also preparing suitable guidance on external examining, based on the Higher Education Academy's Handbook for External Examiners. Future external examiner appointments will require approval by the Academic Standards Committee. This finding supports the affirmation in section A, paragraph 1.51.

2.76   The team concludes that the expectation is not met because the College does not make scrupulous use of external examiner reports through its deliberative committees and processes. The associated level of risk is moderate, as the College's arrangements and procedures are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied.

Expectation: Not met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.77   The College has an annual monitoring process. As the College provision is new, only one cycle of annual monitoring has been completed and therefore one report produced. The preparation of this document is the responsibility of the Course Director. According to the College's quality assurance documentation, the Academic Standards Committee deliberates the report before sending it to GQ. The College does not produce any formal reporting following each 10-week Certificate programme cycle.

2.78   The Academic Quality Assurance Handbook documents a process of periodic review by GQ that will require the College to provide a critical review of its provision.

2.79   The provision of an annual monitoring process means the Expectation is met in theory. The review team scrutinised documents, including the College's Course Monitoring and Evaluation Reports and Academic Standards Committee minutes, and met students and staff. The review team heard that discussions among staff to reflect on programmes are often informal and spontaneous, owing to close working relationships, proximity to one another in the work space and the small size of the College.

2.80   The annual monitoring report contains evidence of the exercise of responsible oversight and a desire to improve the quality of provision. There is evidence of the College taking note of student feedback about workload and assessment, particularly in proposing changes to the Culture & Context of Fashion Unit. The Courses Annual Monitoring and Evaluation report is reasonably thorough and has an action plan. However, this has not been included in the overall College action plan submitted to the review team. The report includes input from the academic team and also refers to improvements to the programmes made as a result of student feedback. The report places a strong reliance on the external examiner's comments, but makes no reference to comments or action points raised by the External Quality Assurer, or to GQ's requirements, or the Quality Code. The review team **recommends** that the College makes effective and consistent use of external reference points in programme monitoring and review by December 2015.

2.81   ASC minutes provided to the review team indicate that the information from the report was reviewed in the Committee but there is little documentation of discussions of the content having taken place. This finding supports the recommendation in section A, paragraph 1.13.

2.82   The annual course monitoring so far undertaken provides an indication of how annual monitoring identifies issues brought up by students and external examiners, and shows how the College identifies actions to resolve problems and promote good practice.

2.83   The team concludes the Expectation to be met as a process is in place for annual monitoring and it has been conducted. The lack of clear documented deliberation of annual monitoring reports and evidenced use of external reference points indicates that insufficient emphasis or priority is given to assuring quality and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.84 The Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook outlines the College's appeal and complaint procedures. The complaints policy encourages local resolution. Students are encouraged to raise complaints by completing a form and supplying evidence within 21 days and to seek resolution in writing. The College seeks a resolution, after which the student is notified in writing of the decision, and made aware of their right to appeal to the Principal. Where complaints remain unresolved, students can appeal to the British Accreditation Council. Handbooks and the VLE inform students of the complaints procedure.

2.85 The appeals procedure allows students to appeal results, in writing, to the Principal within 21 days, with students notified of the outcomes within 30 days. If students remain dissatisfied they can take their case to the British Accreditation Council.

2.86 Student handbooks inform students of how to appeal an academic decision and support for doing so is available from College Registrar, who keeps a record of complaints that escalate to the Academic Standards Committee.

2.87 The availability and design of these processes enable the College to meet the Expectation in theory. The team tested this expectation in meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, support staff, and students, and against the documentary evidence, including the College's complaints and appeals procedures and in student handbooks.

2.88 At the time of review, the College had not received any formal complaints or appeals so the review team was unable to examine the processes as they work in practice. The team heard from support staff that complaints were often resolved at an informal level before they escalated to the formal level. Students were aware of the appeal and a complaint processes, having been informed of them during induction, and knew they were outlined in their student handbook. Students agreed that they would try to resolve complaints with the College informally first.

2.89 The review team concludes that the College has effective mechanisms to capture information about complaints at an informal level. Students were aware of complaints and appeals procedures and the information is consistently available and accessible. As such, the College meets the Expectation and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.90   The mandatory industry project that students undertake in the second term of the year-long Diploma programme is a formally assessed part of the course, and is undertaken in conjunction with established fashion companies. The curriculum is designed to ensure that students develop the practical skills required to work in the fashion industry. It is designed to provide first hand commercial experience and also allow students to focus on areas of personal interest. The project topics available to students are real issues for which the fashion companies involved wish to find solutions.

2.91   When devising project topics, College staff either approach their contacts in the industry or are approached by companies keen to work with the College. Potential industry partners are given a short written brief on the project and provide the College with the problem for which they wish to find a solution. This is discussed with the Principal in the first instance, and then the Course Director, who produces the formal assignment brief, makes sure it meets GQ's requirements and ensures standardisation and equality of learning opportunities across the range of projects. The College seeks to offer a range of projects covering different technologies and skill sets.

2.92   During the project, students liaise with the industry partner and College staff and can approach them for advice and guidance. Students have some autonomy as to who they meet and talk to at the industry partner, with visits to the partners' offices arranged by the College. All contact with industry partners is monitored by the College. Students have a mid-point review with the College to assess their progress.

2.93   At the end of the project, student work is assessed by College staff. Industry partners play no part in this process, although they do give feedback to students at a later date. Students receive detailed written feedback on their project work from their teachers, along with their assessment grade for each part of the project.

2.94   The arrangements that are in place for delivering learning opportunities with others allow the expectation to be met in theory. The team tested the expectation through meetings with industry project providers, teachers, senior staff and students, as well as scrutiny of project briefs and completed marked assignments.

2.95   The process works extremely effectively in practice and forms a strong element of the diploma course in preparing students for future employment, as well as providing them with industry contacts.

2.96   Project topics are real issues relevant to the industry partners. This engages students and provides a positive benefit to the fashion company, as well as offering students the opportunity to improve their industry-relevant skills and thus their potential employability. The projects offered cover a range of fashion aspects, from brand marketing to compiling an issue of a magazine. The team considers that the well-designed industry projects that develop a wide range of employability skills and provide beneficial outcomes for employers is good practice.

2.97   The process for formulating detailed assignment briefs, although partially informal, is handled diligently by College staff, who ensure the quality of learning opportunities across all projects. Students find the industry project highly influential in determining their future career direction. A number of the industry partners go on to voluntarily offer students further learning opportunities, such as attendance at, and the opportunity to assist with, fashion shows.

2.98   The expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low, as the College ensures that arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with other organisations are implemented securely and managed effectively.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.99   In reaching its judgement on the College's quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.100   The College has specific arrangements for designing programmes and working with its awarding organisation so that they are approved. The process for admitting students to programmes is effective and robust. Students benefit from close interaction with their teachers, and learning and teaching includes input from industry professionals as project partners and guest speakers. Students are enabled to develop into professionals in the industry through career coaching and mentoring. They are also enabled to engage in the quality assurance of their programmes through representation opportunities. Assessment is reliable and supports students' learning, with staff suitably supported to work as assessors. The College's arrangements for external examining are boosted through its appointment of a second and additional external examiner. The College's arrangements for programme monitoring and review ensure it is evaluating and enhancing its provision on an annual basis. Complaints and appeal procedures are available to students but remain unused thus far. The College's arrangements for providing learning opportunities with others are implemented effectively, enabling students to work directly in the industry on projects.

2.101   The review team finds that all but one Expectation is met and the risk for each area is low for seven of the Expectations and moderate for three. It makes six recommendations in relation to programme approval, implementing the College's learning and teaching strategy, formalising lesson observations, ensuring students are represented on committees, responding to external examiners, and making use of external reference points in annual programme reviews. The review team identifies five features of good practices, in relations to the involvement of industry professionals in the delivery of programmes, the encouragement of teachers to work as external examiners, the use of guest speakers to inspire students, the high quality resources which promote students' employability, and the industry projects which enable students to develop employability skills and which are mutually beneficial for the students and the industry partner.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Information about the College's vision and mission statements is contained in the College's Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook and strategic plan. It is made available to the public on the website.

3.2 The College provides information to prospective students through its website, which gives access to a digital prospectus and informs students of open days. The website also contains information about the awards through the programme specifications. This outlines intended learning outcomes, the structure of the courses, and the module credits. These programme specifications make it clear that the courses are validated by GQ.

3.3 The College communicates the mutual expectations of students through the student handbooks. These handbooks contain, for example, information about the College's values, outlines of the course, key contacts, the marking and moderation processes, and the submission of coursework.

3.4 The College produces programme specifications, module descriptors and regulations but these are validated by GQ. Marketing materials are produced by teams but responsibility for the accuracy is overseen by the Principal. Handbooks are updated by the Course Director, overseen by the Registrar and Vice Principal. The College's Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Process, and externals, review unit descriptors and the accuracy of courses. The Academic Standards Committee discusses the outcomes of these reviews to ensure learning outcomes remain up to date and relevant. Senior staff, including the Principal and Vice Principal, review the accuracy of the website at team meetings.

3.5 The design of these processes allow the College to meet this Expectation in theory. The review team tested this Expectation in meetings with teaching, senior and support staff and with students. It assessed documents relating to the use of management data, the minutes of meetings, student handbooks, the VLE, the College website, and programme specifications.

3.6 Information about the College's internal structures and quality assurance processes are available to staff through the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook. This handbook contains information about the Quality Code and lays out the College's approach to meeting the expectations through the committee structure, course managers, assessment and examination boards, and the role of externality. This is circulated to staff by the Principal. The team examined this document and found inconsistencies in the description of College processes. These had been identified at the College but there are no formalised reviews of the information.

3.7 Information on the College's VLE is continually updated by College staff, and the College has held a website performance review and planning session. The student handbook is regularly updated by the Registrar and teaching staff throughout the academic year. However, the College does not have an annual, formalised process for ensuring that the VLE and printed documentation for stakeholders is up to date. Therefore, the team

recommends that the College formalises and regularly reviews information produced for internal and external stakeholders to ensure that it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy by December 2015.

3.8   The team reviewed the information given to students about induction and found it comprehensive. Students provide survey feedback which confirms they find induction information suitably robust. Students are given handbooks during induction. The handbooks scrutinised by the team were found to be fit for purpose, and this was confirmed in meetings with students.

3.9   Information about programme specifications and one of the external examiner's reports are published on the public website. These reports are accessible to students, although students with whom the team met were unaware of them. The team found that learning outcomes and the assessment criteria are clearly articulated. The extent to which materials are up to date is also discussed at the Academic Standards Committee. The team examined documentation relating to assessment briefs and found that these provide detailed and appropriate information about the intended learning outcomes, the assessment criteria, and expectations of and timeliness of feedback.

3.10   Management data, including student recruitment data, and student feedback is discussed at Academic Standards Committee. Information about student achievement is monitored by the College. Information for external examiners is made available in a handbook. External reports indicate they are given sufficient information by the College and GQ to ensure effective oversight. Information is given to those working with the College's students in industry projects and industry partners confirm the information they receive is accurate, helpful and supported by regular liaison with the College.

3.11   The evidence from documentation and meetings attended by the team clearly shows that the College is effectively ensuring that information about its higher education provision is fit for purpose and accessible. Students were positive about the information provided by the College and are aware of the knowledge and information available to them. The College has processes in place to update information given to prospective students, external audiences, and to staff and students but this is on an ad hoc and informal basis. Notwithstanding the recommendation regarding the formal annual review of information, the team concludes that the Expectation is met both in design and operation and the associated level of risk is low. This is due to the steps already in place on an informal level in the College to assure itself of the accuracy of information.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.13   The College provides information for students, industry partners, prospective students and the general public. Information about the College's higher education is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Students and industry partners confirm the usefulness of information they receive from the College. Quality assurance procedures are communicated appropriately to staff and students through handbooks. The College has arrangements to review and assure the information it produces.

3.14   The review team found that the Expectation is met and the risk is low. It makes one recommendation in relation formalising a process to review and assure information it produces about its higher education provision.

3.15   The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities **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 Strategic Plan that broadly defines the College's aims, goals and planned activities for the next several years. Embedded in that plan are commitments to quality in terms of teaching and learning and the student experience. An important tenet of the strategy is maintaining provision that meets industry requirements. This is achieved through facilitating student contact with the industry via guest speakers, outside visits and access to industry-standard software and electronic resources. The industry projects are also a key part of enhancing student learning opportunities. Teaching staff are recruited from industry backgrounds and maintain their industry practice in addition to their teaching role at the College.

4.2 The College has responded to the external examiner's recommendation for a greater focus on digital media and marketing, and has invested heavily in new resources in this area. Similarly, students requested more careers guidance and an enhanced personal development plan was put in place.

4.3 The College is responsive to the student voice, via student representatives, the Student Steering Group and approaches by individual students to staff. It has a professional ethos, yet provides a 'family' atmosphere in which students feel comfortable raising their concerns.

4.4 The College's arrangements for enhancement allow for the Expectation to be met in theory. The review team tested the expectation by meeting with students, teaching staff and senior managers. It reviewed College policies, minutes and external reports.

4.5 There exists an ethos of enhancement that is reflected in the individual attention that students receive, the informal discussions among teaching staff, informal observations and co-teaching. Currently, there are no formal mechanisms by which good practice is identified and shared among the academic team and to the wider College.

4.6 Minutes of the Steering Group reflect debate and discussion of issues of concern. Students provided examples of how the College responds to their suggestions for enhancing learning opportunities. With respect to the formal survey feedback, however, students were not aware of any communications to them directly responding to this feedback.

4.7 While the College staff are of a mindset to develop and enhance student learning opportunities, the lack of a teaching and learning strategy or other strategic approach to enhancement has, to date, led the College to a reactive rather than proactive approach to enhancement. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the College articulate and formalise the College's approach to disseminating good practice and enhancing student learning opportunities by December 2015.

4.8 Although the annual course monitoring and External Quality Assurer reports capture areas of good practice and suggest means of further improvement through action planning there is not currently a systematic approach to identifying good practice which would underpin a strategic approach to enhancement across the College's higher education provision.

4.9   The enhancement of learning opportunities is something in which the College is engaged, but a strategic approach has yet to emerge. Nevertheless, the College takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities, through industry engagement, developing employable skills and careers support. On this basis, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met, and risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.10   In reaching its judgement on the College's enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.11   The College's strategic approach to enhancement reflects the value it places in industry-relevant provision, and its desire to inspire students. Its responsiveness to feedback from students and externals is evident and it values their contribution. It seeks to enhance courses through annual review and evaluation.

4.12   The review team found the Expectation is met and the risk is low. It makes one recommendation in relation to sharing good practice and articulating its enhancement approach.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   The College ethos is to equip students with the skills and knowledge they need for either further study or a career in fashion and design. Learning and teaching methods are varied and designed to encourage deeper learning of relevant theory and practical skills. The future employability of students is at the heart of the programmes and is embedded in the College culture. The College chose Gateway Qualifications as the awarding organisation because of its experience in vocational training and emphasis on employability. The curriculum includes many elements to ensure that students learn the practical skills required.

5.2   The identification of individual students' strengths through talent management sessions early on in the programme aids their identification of their future career direction. The professional development planning module is a requirement of the programme and allows students to construct their CVs and develop their interview techniques. Students find this and their portfolios very helpful in developing their employability skills.

5.3   Members of College staff are also practitioners in the fashion industry and use their contacts, as well as the good reputation of the wider Condé Nast brand within the industry, to promote learning opportunities for students. These include visits to fashion shows, museums, exhibitions, and the *Vogue* and *Glamour* magazine offices in the UK and the US respectively. These activities inspire students, highlight progression routes and also provide occasional employment opportunities for talented students.

5.4   The College has invested significantly in industry-standard digital technology and photographic resources, used in the curriculum, to allow students to improve their skills to current industry standards. One industry project partner commented that the students' software skills were, in some cases, more advanced than some industry practitioners she had trained.

5.5   Students receive good career guidance and regular information on current vacancies and internships. The Condé Nast brand is well respected within the industry and stands students in good stead when seeking employment. To further strengthen this area, the College intends to employ a second careers adviser.

5.6   The College maintains progression records for alumni, keeps in regular contact with them and passes on information about employment opportunities. There is currently no statistical analysis of this to inform future programme development.

5.7   High-profile figures from the fashion industry are regularly guest speakers, while practitioners are used as visiting lecturers on a variety of topics. In addition, potential employers are used for industry projects as part of the Diploma course.

5.8   The College brings in several visiting lecturers each week, who come from a range of sectors in the industry. This widens student perspectives and highlights their possible career paths. The format of interviews with high-profile visiting speakers, where they are encouraged to describe their own career progression, inspires students to the possibility of achieving their own aspirations. Staff are able to cite a number of examples where students have obtained employment as a result of the contacts made with visiting speakers.

5.9   The industry projects, which are based on realistic issues faced by the industry partners, give Diploma students the opportunity to explore potential career paths and improve their skills in that area. This also provides contact with potential employers and gives students a first-hand perspective of the pressures in the fashion industry, as well as

opening up potential employment opportunities in some cases. This is enhanced by feedback from teaching staff and industry partners.

5.10   The external examiner, who is a practitioner in the industry, has recommended improvements to the College provision in regard to digital media to ensure that students are kept up to date with current industry standards and increase their attractiveness to future employers. The College has implemented these suggestions effectively.

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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