# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The Salvation Army Trustee Company t/a William Booth College

**November 2017**

## Contents

# About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at The Salvation Army Trustee Company t/a William Booth College. The review took place from 16 to 17 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Terence Clifford-Amos
- Ms Barbara Howell.

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

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

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

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

# Key findings

## Judgements

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body **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 feature of **good practice**.

- The carefully tailored academic, pastoral and learning support that meets the individual needs of students from a range of backgrounds (Expectation B4).

## Recommendations

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

By April 2018:

- ensure that the outcomes of student feedback are made easily and readily available to all students (Expectation B5)
- ensure the scrupulous and widest possible use of external examiner feedback throughout the academic year (Expectation B7)
- consolidate enhancement activities in order to manage the further development of learning opportunities (Enhancement).

By December 2018:

- extend the sourcing of external examiners in readiness for the selection of a new appointee the following year (Expectation A3.4).

## Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the recent and ongoing development of journals/reflective logs to enhance learning among the student body (Enhancement).

# About the provider

William Booth College (WBC) is a centre for learning and development for The Salvation Army (United Kingdom with the Republic of Ireland Territory), with a stated vision to be an 'inspiring and progressive Christian learning community' and a mission dedicated to 'empowering, developing and resourcing people'. The aim of the College is to provide appropriate programmes of education, training and professional development to enable The Salvation Army in the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, to fulfil its mission more effectively.

The operations of WBC are scrutinised by the William Booth College Governing Council, which incorporates those responsible for the broader strategic leadership of The Salvation Army in the United Kingdom Territory along with the WBC leadership team. The Governing Council provides an 'employer' voice into processes of programme design and development, as well as evaluating the extent to which the course facilitates the attainment of denominational requirements for ministerial formation.

The School for Officer Training within WBC is the sole provider of vocational education for Salvation Army Officers (Ministers of Religion) in the UK, and also offers training to students from a number of other Salvation Army territories in Europe. This ministerial training programme is structured around the learning undertaken in the course of completing a Diploma in Higher Education (DipHE) (Salvation Army Officer Training), validated by the University of Gloucestershire. The DipHE was first validated for residential students in September 1998, and part-time distance-learning provision was included within the validation arrangements in 2002. Permission to extend the provision of distance learning beyond the UK was approved in 2007, although this particular form of provision has not been used on a regular basis.

The College is located on an extensive campus at Denmark Hill in south-east London. In addition to the teaching and learning facilities in a Grade II listed building it provides residential accommodation for students and nursery provision. There are a total of 36 full-time students and six part-time distance learning students. The College employs 13 full-time staff who contribute to teaching, with approximately 40 external and guest lecturers.

The College has responsibility for maintaining academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The Collaborative Agreement with the University sets out the mutual responsibilities, which gives the College responsibility for the majority of aspects of its higher education provision. The University provides guidance, but the College has devolved responsibility for all aspects of curriculum development; programme specifications; assessment; student recruitment; admissions and support; engagement with employers; collecting and using student opinion; annual monitoring reports; learning resources; and information for learning opportunities. The College shares responsibility with the University for quality review and monitoring of higher education, the development of staff teaching, learning and assessment at higher education level and student appeals.

A new Principal was appointed in July 2014 prompting consideration of the organisational structure of the College while ensuring that appropriate quality assurance processes are maintained and enhanced for all forms of provision throughout the developmental process. An Assistant Principal was appointed in November 2017 with responsibility to oversee development projects within the College, ensuring that enhancement of learning opportunities remains a central theme.

Since the last QAA review approximately half of the full-time staff have moved to new appointments, with 25 per cent changing in the last 12 months. A healthy student to staff ratio of 4:1 is maintained, but there is a negative impact on levels of embedded good academic practice, particularly as new staff do not tend to come from backgrounds of

teaching in higher education. The appointment policy of The Salvation Army is a challenge in maintaining effective academic practice and teaching staff.

The eventual impact of Brexit upon the ability of the College to deliver accredited courses to students from The Salvation Army across Europe has still to be determined within the overall negotiations and presents a challenge to the College. If free movement of EU students is not included in the eventual settlement, then The Salvation Army will need to consider the practicalities of becoming a Tier 4 sponsor in order to retain this added value within the student learning experience.

In February 2014 the QAA Review for Specific Course Designation evaluated the provision with 'confidence' judgements in all areas with seven areas of good practice for dissemination. There were two advisable recommendations around raising awareness of the Quality Code and ensuring that protocols and procedures are recorded consistently and formally. The review also identified one desirable recommendation to develop and implement a clear written protocol for teaching observations.

Good practice has been disseminated and continues to be enhanced. The College has addressed all of the recommendations ensuring awareness and embedding of the Quality Code, and more consistent and formal recording of protocols and procedures with emphasis during 2015-17 on compliance with the Prevent Strategy. A policy for teaching observations is now established with continuing attention on ensuring compliance and accurate recording. Following feedback from the QAA monitoring visit in 2016, dissemination of good practice from peer observations is now a standing item within staff meetings.

# Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.1 The College is not itself an awarding body and teaches one DipHE validated programme offered by the University of Gloucestershire (the University). The DipHE is designed and delivered by the College as a specific and vocational qualification comprising levels 4 and 5 of the FHEQ as set out in the course handbook. Programme learning outcomes are aligned with the FHEQ and the Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and religious studies (2014).

1.2 The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation A1 to be met.

1.3 The Expectation was tested through a review of relevant documents and meetings held with senior and academic staff and students.

1.4 A formal agreement between the University and the College, confirms approval of the College to offer the award of DipHE and details the responsibilities of the awarding body for the setting and maintenance of academic standards, including external scrutiny by external examiners.

1.5     The validated programme was designed by tutors at William Booth College and is taught and assessed by College staff. Revalidation occurred in 2015, with the collaborative partnership extended for a further five years. In meeting this Expectation the College works fruitfully with its awarding body in maintaining a Programme Specification as set out in the Course Handbook that conforms to the requirements of the FHEQ descriptors at each level of the DipHE and also to the Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and religious studies. Alignment of learning outcomes at all levels of the course is revisited regularly in order to embed good practice. For example, two leadership modules introduced from the 2015-16 academic year prioritised learning outcomes in order to ensure progression between the expectations of study at each level. Intended learning outcomes are increasingly designed to provide greater alignment to the framework at level 5. Discussions with teaching staff and students further demonstrated awareness of differentiated levels of study.

1.6     The Annual Monitoring Report and external examiner report completed by or on behalf of Gloucestershire University, confirm that the maintenance of academic standards is appropriate and consistent with other higher education institutions.

1.7     The review team therefore concludes that Expectation A1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College fully meets the requirements of its awarding body.

**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      Together, the College and its awarding body ensure that national standards are met, and the College organises its programme in ways that meet the expectations of the awarding body. Academic Regulations are outlined in the Course Handbook and align with those of the University.

1.9      The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation A2 to be met.

1.10     The team tested the Expectation through a review of the William Booth College Committee Structure, Partnership Reviews and Boards, Orders and Regulations for the training of Salvation Army Officers, the Course Handbook, the Collaborative Agreement, the Annual Monitoring Report, the Course Evaluation Report 2016, minutes of meetings, and meetings held with staff, the link tutor, external examiners and students during the visit.

1.11     The College Governing Council, Coordinating Council, Course Management Committee and the Tutors' Meeting are responsible for all aspects of the College structure, teaching and learning, and programme delivery and management. Collectively they ensure that both compliance and the particular enterprises and academic interests of the College are fully met. The team confirms an active student representative system is in place as part of the committee structure.

1.12     In practice, the College is bound by the academic regulations of its awarding body. Governance, course development and assessment are monitored in annual reviews and regular partnership boards. The team found that College compliance with the review and monitoring processes of QAA and HEFCE have helped to further raise awareness of the Quality Code and have enhanced the growing culture of quality assurance. The Periodic Review event of May 2015 further looked at College developments over 2013-15 and was able to confirm that William Booth College policies were aligned to awarding body standards. The College is also subject to the Orders and Regulations for the Training of Salvation Army Officers.

1.13     A link tutor advises the College on academic matters and assessment procedures, while a Collaborative Partnership Manager facilitates the relationship between the two institutions. The DipHE examination boards are chaired by the University who also appoint an independent external examiner to verify the appropriateness of intended learning outcomes and assessment procedures. The process is working effectively although the team noted that both the link tutor and external examiner have most recently used Skype to participate in the examination boards.

1.14     The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College fully meets the requirements of its awarding body.

**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     The programme delivered by the College is validated, approved and reviewed by the awarding body, as confirmed by the Collaboration Agreement, with intended learning outcomes outlined in the Programme Specification.

1.16     The review team therefore considers that the College has appropriate policies and procedures in place to enable the Expectation to be met.

1.17     The course team reviewed the Collaboration Agreement, the Course Handbook, an example transcript and held meetings with senior and teaching staff of the College during the visit.

1.18     As set out in the Collaboration Agreement, the College delivers the programme in accordance with the Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors with guidance and approval for changes issued from the University of Gloucestershire. The aims, intended learning outcomes, achievements and award for the programme are outlined in the Programme Specification, which forms the definitive reference point for the University's academic framework and all regulations pertaining to the curriculum, its delivery, student assessment and programme review.

1.19     The Programme Specification is detailed in 24 statements covering the entire operational curriculum and its support structures. The document 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. The statements on award requirements are of definitive importance to level 4 and level 5 students and alumni.

1.20     Example transcripts produced by the College are clear and adhere to the terms of the University's Collaborative Agreement.

1.21     The approach the College takes to the provision and maintenance of records of its higher education provision, and the management of the programme specification for the DipHE is appropriate. The team concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.22     William Booth College is responsible for complying with its awarding body procedures, regulations, monitoring systems and codes of practice. The College does not occupy a position of autonomy in respect of programme and module approval and modifications to programmes but conducts such responsibilities on a shared basis with the University. Validation constitutes programme approval and the current validation took place in 2015 allowing the DipHE to run for a further five years.

1.23     The DipHE in Salvation Army Officer Training is designed and delivered by William Booth College. There is only one programme and the College has no culture of programme development, nor currently, is there a need for such.

1.24     The policies and procedures of the College allow Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.25     The review team read awarding body regulations, agreements between the College and its awarding body, other internal regulatory documents and held interviews with senior and academic staff.

1.26     There is a Collaborative Delivery Plan for the programme. The fruitful relationship between the awarding body is complemented by input from external personnel, principally an external examiner and a link tutor whose advice also relates to approval, quality assurance, monitoring matters, evaluation and review. As discussed in paragraph 1.13, the team noted that the current external examiner has not made a visit to the College in person. The link tutor expressed a wish to visit the College more often, but it has been difficult to schedule the time. The team considers that the duties of the external examiner and the link tutor in these inputs could be more fully realised.

1.27     The external examiner checks the appropriateness and currency of learning outcomes as part of a process in relation to the development and approval of modules. Learning outcome composition, awarding body oversight and approval is systematic, involving the programme team at the staff meeting, consideration by the Course Management Committee, senior staff, and the external examiner, before proceeding to the awarding body for approval. During the meeting with senior staff, the process and progress of learning outcomes for the recently introduced Leadership modules were illustrated as an example. Academic levels are stated in the programme specification.

1.28     The review team concludes Expectation A3.1 is met and the associated risk is low because the general regulatory affairs are confidently set at the appropriate senior levels.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.29     The approval of the programme specification and its acceptance by the awarding body confirms that the programme learning outcomes and assessment methods are duly aligned with the qualification descriptions of the FHEQ (levels 4 and 5) and relevant Subject Benchmark Statement. Assessments are linked to and mapped against learning outcomes. An independent external examiner, appointed by the awarding body, verifies that the learning outcomes and assessments are set at the appropriate levels. Approved module descriptors, learning outcomes and assessments are scheduled for each area of study.

1.30     Support is given to the College in its application of the awarding body's assessment principles and procedures as required.

1.31     The policies and procedures of the College allow Expectation A3.2 to be met.

1.32     The team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of awarding body regulations, the programme specification, external examiner reports, agreements between the College and the University, learning outcomes and assessment instruments, and held discussions with a range of senior and teaching staff.

1.33     The marking of assignments is carried out against the marking criteria and learning outcomes. Tutors are reminded that learning outcomes for the main module descriptors cannot be altered. The College has formed the view that the retention of study guides and previous module descriptors can help to trace how courses and their learning outcomes develop over time.

1.34     In preparation for this review, tutors were asked by the Training Programme Director to evaluate their assessment processes, towards improving potential for student learning, and to address increased student satisfaction; fairer representation of student achievement; greater confidence in academic standards; and increased suitability of assessment methods. The evaluation was instituted by the Training Programme Director, at the Tutors Meeting, with the main summarising discussion taking place in the May 2017 staff meeting. The main outcomes at this meeting included a recommendation that learning outcomes should be included in the Assessment Brief Template, with the aim of providing greater clarity for students, and the inclusion of Assessment for Learning within the Peer Observation template as a means of identifying and sharing classroom assessments that help to promote further learning.

1.35     The awarding body's responsibilities include the provision of all assessment calendars to the College at the beginning of each academic year and the dates of award and module boards of examiners. The awarding body moderates a sample of work from all modules and ensures that the College is made aware of matters concerning the format the University requires in terms of information. Assessment regulations align with the awarding

body and mechanisms are in place to evaluate the alignment of learning outcomes in relation to assessment.

1.36    The review team concludes Expectation A3.2 is met and the associated risk is low because the general regulatory affairs are confidently set at the appropriate senior levels.

**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**

1.37    Annual Monitoring and Review was replaced from 2015-16 by the Annual Partnership Monitoring Institutional Report and Course Evaluation Review, the latter concentrating on the student experience and learning. Both reviews consider matters concerning enhancement and academic standards. The Annual Partnership Monitoring Report is produced by the Training Programme Director on behalf of the College Principal, who then approves it before submission to the awarding body. The Course Evaluation Report includes a Rating Profile Sheet, an Annual Statement on Good Practice, and an Annual Statement on Enhancement and the Action/ Reflective Log.

1.38    The University monitors module evaluation and the College's consultative processes, and also arranges the academic link tutor to liaise with the College. The link tutor sees all monitoring reports, plans and actions and checks that they are carried out. There is no long-term strategy for improvement based on the monitoring and review processes, but there is a commitment to improvement demonstrated through participation in external reviews and responses to the recommendations made.

1.39    The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation A3.3 to be met.

1.40    The review team read documentation provided by the College, including the awarding body's regulations, its agreements with the College, reports on the review of the programme and partnership, minutes of committees, and met with senior and teaching staff of the College and tracked the monitoring and review process.

1.41    Through the Course Management Committee, the Course Leader and staff team, the College organises and implements appropriate module and course evaluation procedures in accordance with relevant awarding body guidelines, and, hitherto has produced an Annual Monitoring and Review (AMR) according to awarding body procedures and deadlines, ensuring that all new staff engage with the AMR induction. All annual monitoring, which takes place for the evaluation of the course, has a focus on the student experience and learning. Both newly established review mechanisms culminate in the maintenance of academic standards through action plans considered at both the Course Management Committee and Tutor Meetings. The participation of tutors in monitoring is through the completion of annual action plans.

1.42    The QAA monitoring visit in 2016 reported that annual programme monitoring was thorough, adhering to awarding body regulations, and that the recording of quantitative and qualitative information was a diligent process.

1.43    The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the monitoring and review procedures are thorough and meet the requirements of the awarding body.

**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    Externality is primarily achieved through the link tutor and the external examiner, who also participates in the management of academic standards. The appointment of the external examiner is the responsibility of the awarding body. A short-term (one year) appointment was made for 2015-16 academic year and a longer term engagement has now been agreed and confirmed. Following the conclusion of the previous appointee's term of office, which ended in 2015, some conflicts of interest at the awarding body caused difficulties in finding an appropriate replacement. A one-year appointment for 2015-16 was the outcome before a suitable appointment was made for the 2016-17 year onwards. However, when making any recommendations to the awarding body, the review team believes that rather less conflict of interest would be encountered were the College to cast its net more widely across the pool of potential external examiners. The review ream **recommends** that by December 2018 the College should extend the sourcing of external examiners in readiness for the selection of a new appointee the following year.

1.45    External examiner reports confirm the maintenance of academic standards and acknowledge a number of ongoing improvements and enhancements in the current operational curriculum. The external examiner's report of 2016 endorses the excellent work of the College. Other examples of externality, between 2014-17, include a total of 38 visiting speakers to the College, most of whom have a church or Salvation Army background.

1.46    The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.47    The team considered a range of academic external inputs, including external examiner reports, awarding body advice, and a range of external and professional inputs that inform academic, vocational and professional processes. The team also met senior and teaching staff, and held a telephone meeting with the external examiner.

1.48    The external examiner and the link tutor provide externality relating to academic standards. The external examiner is responsible for evaluating samples of assessed work and reviews this work before the annual boards of examiners. Automatically, any work of first class achievement (above 70 per cent) or failing work or below (40 per cent) is seen by the external examiner, who is also given the right to see any other piece of work. The link tutor oversees the academic work of the College on behalf of the awarding body.

1.49    In addition to periodic visits made by QAA, the awarding body has a long heritage of training teachers in Religious Studies and validation experience with other theological colleges that brings to the College a range of external experience pertaining to quality and standards. The DipHE examination boards are chaired by a University member. Other than verifying learning outcomes and assessment briefs and reviewing students' work, the external examiner is involved in the monitoring process, through the Course Management Committee. Link tutor liaison can also be a prime source of external information and advice. A Collaborative Partnerships Manager also engages with

the College.

1.50    In relation to internal aspects of externality, during 2015-17 College staff participated in 23 external engagements. The William Booth College Governing Council also provides some stakeholder input in terms of UK Territorial Strategy.

1.51    The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met. The associated level of risk is low because there is evidence of consistent external engagement both to and from the College.

**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

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

1.53     All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met. There is one recommendation made for Expectation A3.4 with low risk and no affirmations or good practice points relate to this area.

1.54     The College, in partnership with its awarding body takes due regard of the awarding body's framework and regulations for the DipHE programme under the terms of the Collaborative Agreement and is effective in maintaining the academic standards of the programme.

1.55     The DipHE is validated and approved by the University with clear governance arrangements and good oversight of the maintenance of academic standards. The programme is designed and delivered by the College as a specific and vocational qualification comprising levels 4 and 5 of the FHEQ as set out in the course handbook. A formal agreement between the University and the College confirms approval of the College to offer the award of DipHE and details the responsibilities of the awarding body for the setting and maintenance of academic standards, including external scrutiny by external examiners.

1.56     The fruitful relationship with the awarding body is complemented by input from external personnel, principally an external examiner. However, the team noted that following the conclusion of the previous appointee's term of office, which ended in 2015, some conflicts of interest caused difficulties in finding an appropriate replacement. A one-year appointment for 2015-16 was the outcome before a suitable appointment was made for the 2016-17 year onwards. The review team believes that, when making any recommendations to the awarding body in the future, rather less conflict of interest would be encountered were the College to cast its net more widely across the pool of potential external examiners. Therefore, the team recommends that by December 2018, the College should extend the sourcing of external examiners.

1.57     The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the College **meets** UK expectations.

# 2    Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

**Findings**

2.1      The broad principles for programme design have taken account of the policies of the awarding body and the Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and religious studies. The process of programme modification fundamentally accords with the strategic policies and priorities of The Salvation Army for the training of Officers (Ministers of Religion). The William Booth Governing Council ensures adherence to the Orders and Regulations for the Training of Salvation Army Officers (1991) and also the Core Competencies for Salvation Army Officers (2012), which outline the key areas of competence in the education and training of students. Key to the design of the programme is Learning for Life and Future Ministry. The DipHE programme is aligned with levels 4 and 5 of the FHEQ and takes account of credit frameworks, transferable credit and accreditation of prior learning (APL). External voices are included in all consultation and development processes. Strategic planning is dependent on the outcomes of the structural and periodic review.

2.2      The College does not have degree awarding powers so cannot be ultimately responsible for the design, development and approval of programmes. However, the College is able to propose new modules. There is systematic and clear compliance with the requirements of the awarding body in the design, development and approval of modules.

2.3      The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation B1 to be met.

2.4      The review team read the relevant awarding body documents, including the course modification process and procedures and held interviews with staff responsible for processing subject proposals.

2.5      To date there has been just one programme design and approval and the College otherwise has no plans to extend its provision. Some concern has been expressed by the University regarding the future viability of the programme though this view is not shared by the College. There is a clear process for course modification that involves the course leader submitting a completed pro forma to the Course Management Committee for consideration. Liaison takes place with the external examiner prior to this submission. Requests for module modifications on the programme can only be considered through the awarding body's Programme Change Approval Process, which has final decision-making powers. The process is clear and understood by all staff.

2.6      The team concludes that Expectation B1 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the present 'modification' system works as an approval process to the satisfaction of both the College and the awarding body.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.7        The policies and procedures used to admit students are fair, transparent, explicit and consistently applied. Students do not apply directly to the DipHE course but apply initially to train as Salvation Army Officers. Admission is further conditional upon the successful completion of an individual vocational candidacy process to include a vocational assessment conference, orientation visits to the College, an interview, and an assessment of academic competency and appropriate preparatory studies. Diagnostic assessments are carried out during the application process with diagnostic assessment reports reviewed by the Training Coordinator for Learning Support in advance of admission.

2.8        The policies and procedures for admission enable the Expectation to be met.

2.9        The team tested the Expectation by review of the Course Handbook, the Collaborative Delivery Plan, the Access and Participation Statement, the AMR Report, the Candidate Recruitment and Training Agendas, and by scrutiny of the Candidates Unit, and Dyslexia support websites together with meetings with staff and students.

2.10        The recruitment method is non-standard in nature. Candidates are admitted conditionally until they successfully complete the individual vocational candidacy process. The College, as the sole provider of Officer training for The Salvation Army in the UK, ensures that all prospective students undertake the same process of assessment and selection, as organised by The Candidates Unit.

2.11        The process is rigorous and includes a vocational assessment conference, orientation visits to the College and interviews with the School for Officer Training, assessment of academic ability and appropriate preparatory studies. Diagnostic assessments take place to establish any potential learning needs, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia through an external consultancy agent.

2.12        The application process is reviewed as part of the Periodic Review and Revalidation process and the findings are considered at the Course Management Committee with subsequent inclusion of the minutes within the Annual Monitoring process. The broad terms and conditions of the application of students can be found in the Course Handbook, and admission requirements are further set out in the Collaborative Delivery Plan. Staff and students are clear about the recruitment and selection process with the exception of the term 'unless exceptional circumstances apply' used within the context of the application process in the Collaborative Delivery Plan. Meetings with individuals and groups of staff highlighted that the rationale for this term was unclear. Some clarification of the term would ensure congruence between all relevant sources of admissions documentation.

2.13        The team confirms that appropriate admissions training takes place.

2.14        All students participate in a two-week programme of induction and study skills at the beginning of the course with specialised learning support available from a dedicated member of the staff team. The induction further comprises a group library visit and the distribution of

membership cards.

2.15     The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met. The associated risk is low because the systems in place are sound and to the satisfaction of the awarding body.

**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**

2.16    The learning and teaching strategies in place promote a shared understanding of key principles of expectation, available support and resources, underpinning frameworks of good practice and opportunities to provide feedback. The College provides a higher than average proportion of contact time and at the same time encourages shared and active learning with students taking an increasing role for their own development. Students are further encouraged to apply their learning as part of practical placement.

2.17    Teaching staff are appointed by the national leader of The Salvation Army and are expected to have practical experience of ministry and competency in pastoral care as well as relevant qualifications. The full-time complement is supplemented by appropriately qualified guest lecturers and part-time tutors. The full-time staff teach across both year groups and in some cases level 6 within the franchised top-up degrees commensurate with their qualifications.

2.18    There is a long-standing concern from the University with regard to the relatively short-term nature of staff appointments, which stems from Salvation Army policy, although the institutional need for some members of staff to retain longer tenures is broadly recognised.

2.19    Annual appraisals and five-yearly development reviews are used to identify personal development needs to include further study, and staff are supported to attend conferences and seminars. Staff development is further pursued through Tutor Meetings and peer observations, and staff are also encouraged to participate in a Personal Initiative Project outside of the College.

2.20    The College provides a conducive learning environment to include a well-equipped library, residential accommodation, communal spaces and recreation facilities. Based on an internal survey and the National Student Survey (NSS) results, the College receives the lowest level of satisfaction for the IT provision.

2.21    The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation B3 to be met.

2.22    The review team tested the Expectation through a review of the Cadets Manual, Course Handbook 2016-17, Staff Handbook 2016-17, Annual Monitoring Report, Periodic Review and Action Plans, Tutor Meeting minutes, Library report, NSS results and meetings with staff and students.

2.23    The full-time DipHE is of two years duration, with a residential component for the first year from September to July, followed by an extended practical placement from July to October. The distance learning route takes place over three to five years and is undertaken on a part-time basis. Average study commitment is between 15 to 20 hours per week of study, which is supplemented by spiritual formation and placement-based learning.

2.24    There is a Learning and Teaching Strategy which embraces independent and collaborative learning, learning for life and future ministry and practice-informed learning and teaching. A study skills' programme clarifies conventions for assignment work and outlines a number of helpful study techniques, for which a formative essay is undertaken, allowing students early practice in researching and composing written assignments. Further learning support is offered by the Training Coordinator (Learning Support) and Training Programme Director.

2.25    Students are encouraged towards shared and active learning, with a progressive emphasis on attaining greater responsibility for their own development. The College offers a range of teaching methods for both residential and distance learning programmes and the students generally value the variety.

2.26    Academic expertise includes those with specialist knowledge in key areas and the requisite teaching qualifications and there are those whose qualifications are more aligned with professional practice. There are appropriately qualified guest lecturers and part-time tutors whose teaching is combined with professional ministry.

2.27    Staff appointments are expected to be for five years and can be extended; however, the tenure is not controlled by College provision. Staff turnover has been described as high and there is a degree of frustration about the potential lack of continuity, which is viewed as detrimental. However, staff showed a strong commitment to their current role and an acceptance that fluidity is part of the calling of a Salvation Army Officer.

2.28    In coordination with the School for In-service Training and Development, there is scholarly activity, and staff are supported for further study, conferencing and seminars for the provision of personal texts. Developing a Personal Initiative Project outside of the College helps to retain currency in missional practice and maintain academic activity and currency.

2.29    Annual appraisals and five-yearly development reviews assist with target-setting and personal development. There are collegial team meetings and peer observations that contribute to staff development. All tutors are normally observed at least twice a year, once by personal arrangement/choice and once by the Principal, Assistant Principal or the Training Programme Director, which is not planned in advance. The College has in place a peer-observation recording spreadsheet with a revised observation form. Both the observer and the tutor complete the same form, which then facilitates the follow-up discussion to identify any relevant points for future development and the sharing of good practice.

2.30    The College has a clear commitment to providing the necessary library, audio-visual and computing resources, although information technology has not been to the satisfaction of student expectation, particularly Wi-Fi and network efficiencies. Following the instigation of an external review of the facilities, a budget and development plan is now in place to significantly improve connectivity.

2.31    The review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the College's approach to learning and teaching is sound and rigorous.

**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     Each student is allocated a Pastoral Support Officer who offers guidance and mentoring throughout the period of study and this work is coordinated by The Assistant Spiritual Programme Director. A nominated coordinator for Learning Support is also in place to organise the initial programme of study skills on a one-to-one basis for those students who have normally been identified at the admission stage as requiring support for dyslexia or dyspraxia. Initial practice assignments and formative assessment is further used to identify learning needs and specific support is offered for those students for whom English is their second language.

2.33     As set out in the Cadets Manual, the Training Programme Director meets mid-year with all students to discuss programmes and in the second year the discussion is extended to include future learning opportunities.

2.34     The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation B4 to be met.

2.35     The team tested the Expectation through a review of the Cadets Manual, Course Handbook, Staff Handbook, Annual Monitoring Report 2014-15, Study Skills Programme. Periodic Review, the Periodic Review and Revalidation Report and meetings with staff, and current and alumni students.

2.36     There is a nominated coordinator for Learning Support who organises the initial programme of study skills and works with students individually. Learning support issues mostly arise from instances of dyslexia or dyspraxia and are normally assessed as part of the admissions process as described in paragraph 2.7. Appropriate systems of support are made available through an external counselling service, internal learning support and study skills, which the students describe as very useful. There is an early practice assignment, and formative assignments with the purpose of identifying previously unrecognised learning needs allowing early support to be made available. Any potential learning difficulties are further supported through technology in the classroom with examples given of computer add-ons and the use of coloured paper.

2.37     The values of The Salvation Army and its commitment to social justice underpins all aspects of student support. This includes a high level of student contact and mentoring, through the Pastoral Support Officer, and the Assistant Spiritual Programme Director who incorporates the function of a student welfare officer, while also coordinating the work of the Pastoral Support Officers. Staff, students and alumni appreciate the open-door policy of the Pastoral Support Officer who holds regular meetings. Pastoral support incorporates mentoring and spiritual guidance that is negotiated and tailored to the individual needs of the students. An example was provided of the proactive and organised support for a student when staff were informed of an overseas family bereavement.

2.38     The Training Programme Director meets with all students at the mid-year of each year to consider future learning opportunities important to academic progression. The students also meet the Principal twice a year.

2.39     Distance learning students receive additional support from the Training Coordinator (Distance Learning Programmes) and local pastoral care is offered from within the Division.

2.40     The team views the carefully tailored academic, pastoral and learning support that meets the individual needs of students from a range of backgrounds as **good practice**.

2.41     The review team concludes that Expectation B4 is met. The associated risk is low because of the high level of pastoral care and encouragement supported by a good range of human and support resources.

**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**

2.42     The College organises a diverse range of learning towards the motivation of student engagement in formal, informal and independent learning. There are opportunities for students to lead individual and group class seminars in teaching their peers and engage in formative peer assessment. A well-formulated assessment brief template has been drafted for use in these activities.

2.43     Student evaluations of course modules take place at the end of each module, the outcomes of which can result in minor changes in module guides. To show that the College is responsive, changes are communicated to new students. There are student representatives for the Coordinating Council, School for Officer Training, Coordinating Council, the Cadets Committee, the Course Management Committee, Health and Safety and Catering committees. Students are free to inform representatives about any issues and can use the open-door facility to inform staff. Student representatives receive minutes, and so feedback is initially through them, although dissemination to other students is not consistent. Some students are aware that minutes can be accessed on the College intranet, while others stated that no minutes were available. Changes in the student learning experience have clearly taken place although one alumni stated that the pace of change and resolution of issues at committee stages is not always as quick as it could be. The team **recommends** that by April 2018 the College should ensure that the outcomes of student feedback are made easily and readily available to all students.

2.44     The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation B5 to be met.

2.45     The review team read pertinent academic and support documentation provided by the College and held meetings with students from all years.

2.46     Student engagement in teaching and assessment is a central part of the educational process of the College. It forms a major element of academic engagement and is a requirement for group presentation tasks. Participating students are expected to work within the prescribed learning outcomes and work with tutors in assessing student presentations.

2.47     Students, as evaluators, respond to a range of academic matters, including content, teaching methods, study aids, library, assessment and achievement of learning outcomes. Students as representatives of each level and mode of study are members of the Course Board, a venue which considers programme design, academic management and student evaluations. The Course Board also considers matters of student concern. 'Breathing Spaces' is a much-valued development, implemented following student requests for change.

2.48     The team heard that a student representative had also been invited to take part in the strategic considerations pertaining to governance and structure of the College. Alumni with two years' experience are invited back to the College to speak to students. The College has provided a Student Evaluation Process Chart, and the NSS 2016-17 indicates very high levels of satisfaction with the course.

2.49    The review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met. The associated risk is low because of the high level of student engagement in College activities.

**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

2.50      As described in Expectation A.1, the processes for the maintenance of academic standards, and for assessment of student performance against those standards, in accordance with the policies and regulations of the awarding body, are set out in the Collaborative Agreement.

2.51      A range of formative and summative assessment tools allow students to perform in relation to established learning outcomes. The processes for marking and moderating are clear and include regulations for submission, feedback timescales, and academic protocols. The external examiner advises on areas capable of being enhanced, including the quality of assessment responses to students. For such purposes action and enhancement plans are in place.

2.52      Accreditation for relevant prior-certificated learning (APL) at higher education level is available subject to verifiable equivalence evidence. A portfolio of evidence is required containing full details of the relevant prior learning. A maximum APL of 30 credits at each level of study may be awarded. APL is discussed with students as part of induction. A board of examiners is held in accordance with established regulations.

2.53      The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation B6 to be met.

2.54      The review team read external examiners' reports, Staff and Course Handbooks, the awarding body's regulations, College policies, procedures and associated documentation.

2.55      Sound and comprehensive advice for students about assessment is offered in the Course Handbook, which is also repeated in the Staff Handbook. Assessment brief templates are well formulated and assessment briefs for each assignment are prepared prior to the beginning of the academic year. They are then reviewed by the Assessment Scrutiny Panel that comprises members of the School for Officer Training, awarding body members and the external examiner. However, the College recognises that the procedure for recording sign-offs needs to be tightened and enhanced. Previously, the process has relied on short informal email approvals but a more formal, minuted panel meeting will be instituted in the future.

2.56      All work is first marked and moderated. Third marking takes place for failing work, and work within the first-class honours mark range or when agreement of marks cannot be reached after initial moderation. Samples of moderated work are made available to the awarding body link tutor and the external examiner. Student work is normally returned within 28 days.

2.57      Students can request extensions for essays and assignments. Approval may be granted following consultation between the Training Programme Director, Pastoral Support Officer and the module tutor. The College uses both formative and summative assessment methods, and marking and moderation procedures, submission guidelines, feedback

timescales and academic offences are made clear to both staff and students.

2.58    The external examiner provides feedback on marking and moderation. The external examiner for 2016 confirms that standards in student achievement are 'entirely comparable' with similar institutions and in line with 'some of the best practice he had seen anywhere'. He further commented that William Booth was a 'well-run, efficient college'. No students have met the current external examiner.

2.59    Tutorial support is provided prior to assessments and in cases of poor academic practice or academic offences students may be required to attend tutorials for support.

2.60    The review team concludes that the Expectation B6 is met. The associated risk is low because the schemes, policies and processes for the assessment of students are thorough, to the satisfaction of the external examiner and the awarding body.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:    Low**

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

**Quality Code,** *Chapter B7: External Examining*

**Findings**

2.61     A single external examiner is the normal appointment for work at the College. The appointment is made by the awarding body in accordance with established procedures. As discussed in paragraph 1.13 following the conclusion of the previous appointee's term of office, which ended in 2015, some conflicts of interest caused difficulties in finding an appropriate replacement. A one-year appointment for 2015-16 was the outcome before a suitable appointment was made for the 2016-17 year onwards.

2.62     External examiner reports are delivered verbally at the Boards of Examiners before being submitted in writing at the beginning of an academic year. External examiner reports are discussed by the Course Management Committee and the Tutors' Meeting. Responses are drafted for incorporation into annual reporting mechanisms and enhancement planning. Although no direct student viewpoints on external examiner reports have been recorded in minutes, students are part of the Course Management Committee where the annual report is presented and responses approved.

2.63     The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation B7 to be met.

2.64     The team read the information and schedules provided for external examiners, considered the practice of the external examiner and staff who have liaised with him, and listened to staff and student viewpoints on external examiner reports. The team also held telephone conversations with the current external examiner and the link tutor.

2.65     The awarding body approves the external examiner who then liaises with the College. The external examiner provides the required feedback information and monitors all aspects of external examining for the duration of the academic year. The College responds to the external examiner, includes external examiner reports in discussion at Course Management Committee and shares external examiner reports with the student representative. An input is made to annual reporting and enhancement plans. The Annual Monitoring Report for 2014-15 contains several references to the external examiner report for that year, including items for recommended action planning. These include a fuller induction and mentoring process for new tutors, and continued training on the use of the grade descriptor in assessment to encourage tutors to make use of the full range of marks. College course planners also aid the external examining process.

2.66     Senior staff and the link tutor commented that the current College partnership with the external examiner could be stronger. There are some specific concerns about the lack of attendance at the Board of Examiners in person, preferring the medium of Skype, and that all samples of student work are seen online through Dropbox. The external examiner has been invited to the College to meet staff and students but the offer has not been taken up due to distance and commitments. The team was informed that the external examiner had not attended the formal induction at the awarding body and that his verbal commentaries to staff were not always included in the final written report presented to the Board of Examiners. Some College staff question whether the external examiner is entirely clear about the provision at William Booth. The awarding body and College are not unhappy with the appointee but wish to work more closely and rely on him as a critical friend, as was the case with the previous appointee. Paradoxically, the current external examiner also wishes to be engaged in critical friendship with the College. It is understood that matters concerning external examining are currently being handled by the awarding body.

2.67    While there are a number of procedural issues for the awarding body to consider, general standards and oversight have not been comprised in any way. Nevertheless, the review team **recommends** that by April 2018 the College ensures the scrupulous and widest possible use of external examiner feedback throughout the academic year.

2.68    The review team concludes that Expectation B7 is met. The associated risk is low because the external examiner is fulfilling his primary role.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.69     Annual monitoring and reporting mechanisms evaluate the programme and identify areas for possible enhancement. Risk-based assessment in course evaluation now embraces four core areas: student satisfaction; student attainment; course viability; and course currency. Features of good practice are identified for wider College dissemination and for inclusion in an enhancement plan. Staff, students and the external examiner all play their part in the monitoring process which takes place through the Course Management Committee. Previously, the Annual Monitoring Report evaluated the programme and identified areas for enhancement. The Course Evaluation Report now provides a risk-based assessment of student satisfaction, student attainment, course viability and currency with aspects of good practice disseminated via an enhancement plan. The Course Management Committee has monitored these processes.

2.70     The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation B8 to be met.

2.71     The review team read a range of monitoring policies and structures, minutes of meetings, reports and action plans and documents and held interviews with a range of involved personnel, including students.

2.72     The newly established Annual Partnership Monitoring Report (2015-16) comprises eight sections dealing with all aspects of partnership. The newly-established Course Evaluation Report (2015-16) includes the Red, Amber, Green (RAG) Rating Profile Sheet, an annual statement on good practice, an annual statement on enhancement, and an action/ reflective log. Both these new structures replace the previous Annual Monitoring Report.

2.73     Achievements in annual partnership monitoring have highlighted the increasing alignment of William Booth College policies and procedures more closely with those of the awarding body as well as with the Quality Code. Challenges were identified as the increased duplication in terms of quality assurance reviews and monitoring reports that are required by external agencies, such as QAA, HEFCE, HESA, as well as by the awarding body. The Course Evaluation Report for 2016, identified high student satisfaction and retention, greater consistency in peer observation, steady enrolment, 100 per cent employment of graduating students, an enhanced induction process for staff and students and, in terms of course currency, a very good external examiner report.

2.74     The final compilation of the Annual Monitoring Report 2014-15 states that the periodic review and revalidation held in May 2015 were successful. New modules had been introduced and there had been a reduction in the summative assessment practices to assist students who had not experienced recent study in higher education. Student retention remained high. Mentoring for new staff had been established and, in response to the external examiner, progress had been made in marking and moderation procedures. Raising awareness of the Quality Code and implementation of relevant sections of it had been a priority. An ongoing concern, in monitoring matters, was the relatively short-term nature of staff appointments. During the meetings with both senior and academic staff, the team was fully apprised of the nature of Salvation Army short-term tenure and recognise that it is not the responsibility of William Booth College. While being impressed with the levels of

long-term commitment and enthusiasm clearly in evidence during these meetings, the team agreed that the nature of such appointments is not always in the spirit of higher education, which requires longer term staffing sustainability, particularly in leadership, teaching, research and administration. For the future, the review team hopes that William Booth College will become instrumental in pioneering the staffing changes necessary towards its development in higher education. The link tutor has noted that staff turnover is high.

2.75 The comprehensive AMR 2014-15 report and its two new successors, outlined above, are highly informative documents, which complement the Collaborative Delivery Plan, and provide evidence that the monitoring process is working well.

2.76 The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met. The associated level of risk is low because the procedures and processes for monitoring and review are dynamic and effective.

**Expectation:   Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.77     Procedures for complaints and appeals are appropriately and clearly outlined offering particular processes for dealing with escalation and resolution. During the 2014-17 period, only one complaint escalated to the second level (formal complaint resolution) which was satisfactorily resolved. The outcome gave rise to minor amendments to a particular procedural area for the 2017-18 year. Access to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) is clearly evidenced in both sets of procedures.

2.78     Where there are grounds for an appeal an Academic Appeals Group is formed, comprising the Principal, the Training Programme Director, Spiritual Programme Director and one tutor, to consider whether there is evidence that an appeal should be heard. A decision is communicated to the student within five working days. Appeals are not heard when notification of adverse circumstances could have been communicated before the relevant Board of Examiners, or in the case of disagreement with the academic judgement made in assessing an individual piece of work.

2.79     If the Academic Appeals Group finds in favour of the student, appeals will be heard by an Academic Appeals Committee comprising the Training Programme Director, two tutors and a secretary. The student is informed of the result of the appeal in writing within five working days of the meeting. In the event of a successful appeal, the Board of Examiners is advised by the Academic Appeals Committee. If a student is not satisfied with the decision he or she may appeal directly to the awarding body in writing to the Academic Registrar and the student will also be advised of access to the OIA.

2.80     The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation B9 to be met.

2.81     The review team considered the established processes, the information provided to students and information relating to a recent complaint that was successfully handled and concluded.

2.82     The procedures in place have been rarely used by the student body. In a single case of a complaint and its resolution, the evidence suggests that the College has prepared itself soundly across both sets of procedures. The single complaint related to a lack of timely feedback upon a draft submission, which was resolved following a procedural investigation. The particular student was satisfied with the proposed revisions to guidance on draft submissions. Course and staff handbook guidance on draft submissions have since been amended for 2017-18.

2.83     Procedures for policies for academic appeals and complaints are comprehensive and accessible to students. The review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met and the associated 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**

2.84    There are no placement or work-based learning elements necessary to achieve the relevant learning outcomes.

**Expectation:    Not applicable**
**Level of risk:    Not applicable**

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

**Quality Code,** *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

**Findings**

2.85     The College does not currently offer research degrees.

**Expectation:     Not applicable**
**Level of risk:     Not applicable**

# The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.87    All of the applicable Expectations are met, with good practice identified in Expectation B4, and two recommendations with low risk in Expectations B5, and B7.

2.88    Processes for the design, development and approval of programmes are clear and well understood by staff. The policies and procedures used to admit students are fair, transparent, explicit and constantly applied.

2.89    The team makes two recommendations regarding learning opportunities - for Expectation B5 the College should ensure that the outcomes of student feedback are made easily and readily available to all students. Student representatives receive minutes, and so feedback is initially through them, although dissemination to other students is not consistent. Some students are aware that minutes can be accessed on the College intranet, while others stated that no minutes were available. Changes in the student learning experience have clearly taken place although one alumni claimed that the pace of change and resolution of issues at committee stages is not always as quick as it could be. A more formal and consistent process of feedback about the decisions made at meetings would be beneficial to students.

2.90    The recommendation in Expectation B7 is to ensure the scrupulous and widest possible use of external examiner feedback throughout the academic year. External examiner reports are delivered verbally at the Board of Examiners before being submitted in writing at the beginning of the academic year. The reports are discussed by the Course Management Committee and the Tutors' Meeting and College responses are drafted for incorporation into annual reporting mechanisms and enhancement planning. There are no direct student viewpoints on external examiner reports and little evidence that issues from the report are discussed more generally throughout the year.

2.91    The team identified one area of good practice in Expectation B4 relating to the carefully tailored academic, pastoral and learning support that meets the needs of students from a range of backgrounds. There is a wide range of pastoral and academic support for students based firmly within the values of The Salvation Army and its commitment to social justice. Appropriate systems of support are made available through an external counselling service, internal learning support and study skills, which the students describe as very useful. Any potential learning difficulties are further supported through technology in the classroom such as computer add-ons and the use of coloured paper.

2.92    The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **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     Public information about the College is available on the College website and an information leaflet about the DipHE course is used as part of the interview process for applicants. Information on academic standards, quality assurance and an outline of expectations is included in the Cadet Manual, the Course Handbook, subject-based study guides and is discussed as part of course induction.

3.2     Transcripts of achievement are provided by the College with diploma certificates issued by the University of Gloucestershire as set out in the Collaborative Agreement.

3.3     The policies and procedures of the College body allow Expectation C to be met.

3.4     The team tested the expectation by a review of the college website, the Applicants Course Guide, the Cadet Manual, the Course Handbook, the Candidates Acceptance Pack, a Sample Study Guide, the Collaborative Agreement, a Sample Transcript, and meetings held with staff and students.

3.5     Public information on the College is available from the clear and easily navigable website, which is orientated to the wider context of The Salvation Army. There are links to the Access and Participation Statement, collaborative partner information and QAA review reports.

3.6     The Candidates Unit undertakes marketing activities, encouraging people to explore their spiritual vocation including officer training and vocational discovery. There are national and regional Salvation Army events to which The Candidates Unit issues marketing information.

3.7     The admissions interview is complemented by an information leaflet about the DipHE course, including the intended learning outcomes and terms of admission. The Applicants' Course Guide is user-friendly, containing clear and abundant information on the welcome, content of the course, placement and learning environment.

3.8     When admitted for ministerial training, students are provided with fuller information about studentship, including residential accommodation, financing and preparatory reading. This initial information is then augmented with internal structural matters including academic standards, quality assurance and outline of expectations included within the Cadets Manual, Course Handbook, Essential Guide to the Training Programme and subject-based study guides. Course Handbooks are comprehensive and well defined, containing the programme specification, the process for complaints and appeals, and clearly describes academic, learning and pastoral support.

3.9     The review team concludes that Expectation C is met. The associated level of risk is low because information at all levels is clear, abundant and accessible.

**Expectation:     Met**
**Level of risk:   Low**

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

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

3.11     The College provides information about its higher education provision for prospective and current students, employers, staff, and public stakeholders, and for those with responsibility for maintaining standards and assuring quality. Information is accessible, appropriate and accurate.

3.12     No recommendations, affirmations or good practice points relate to this area.

3.13     On the basis of the documentation provided, and discussions with staff and students, the team concludes that the College provides information that is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible and in so doing William Booth College **meets** UK expectations for the quality of information about learning opportunities.

# 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 William Booth College is committed to a range of possible enhancements, including the learning opportunities that it offers to students. Action and enhancement plans are used to further the continuous improvement of provision and the implementation of identified good practice.

4.2 Some of the issues and processes identified by the College are more normative activities than enhancement, such as would be found in most educational institutions. For example: the appointment of a new external examiner and the development of a good relationship with that person; clarifying the provision of student numbers; and improving the understanding of changes to awarding body procedures and mid-year examination boards covering the progression of part-time, and distance-learning students. However, there is a range of good practice issues that can be identified as convincing enhancements.

4.3 The policies and procedures of the College body allow the Enhancement Expectation to be met.

4.4 The review team read documentation dealing with a range of normative practices, enhancements and potential enhancements and held meetings with senior and teaching staff of the College.

4.5 Recommendations from the last QAA review have stimulated significant progress. These include further development of awareness-raising of the Quality Code, the consistent recording of protocols and procedures and the development of clear written protocols for teaching observations. Elsewhere, enhancement of assessment procedures and feedback are matters subject to ongoing development, and initiatives such as the mentoring programme are intended to aid new staff to embed good practice.

4.6 Current developments include methods towards the sharing of good practice, a new appointment as Assistant Training Programme Director, the availability of holistic support in practical placements and classroom activities, opening the DipHE to a wider student cohort and, as a project currently underway, designing technologies to support teaching. Peer review is at an advanced stage of development. In other matters, the use of the average grade on moderation sheets, students making greater use of suggestions for improvement and the incorporation of students' use of feedback in evaluations have target dates for completion. It is possible that the Principal's internal rationalisation of the four College departments - The Candidates Unit, School for Officer training, School for Inservice Training and Business Services - could result in streamlining enhancements concerning internal senior administration and this will need to be evaluated at a later date.

4.7 A senior member of staff stated that the College had not greatly used the language of enhancement, but that this had not diminished interest and commitment. During the Academic Staff Meeting, comprehension of the concept was enthusiastically clarified and shaped during the discussion about journals/reflective logs. The team **affirms** the recent and ongoing development of journals/reflective logs to enhance learning among the student body.

4.8    In relation to future developments, the team **recommends** that by April 2018 the College should consolidate enhancement activities in order to manage the further development of all learning opportunities.

4.9    The review team concludes that the Enhancement Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is moderate, however, because the College needs to further develop strategic leadership and reporting in this area of its activities.

**Expectation:    Met**
**Level of risk:    Moderate**

# The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.11     The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is moderate. There is one affirmation and one recommendation.

4.12     The College is committed to a range of possible enhancements, including the learning opportunities that it offers to students. Action and enhancement plans are used in the continuous improvement of provision and the implementation of identified good practice. However, some of the issues and processes identified by the College are more normative activities than enhancement, such as would be found in most educational institutions. Nevertheless, there has been significant progress since the last QAA review with further development of awareness-raising of the Quality Code, the consistent recording of protocols and procedures and the development of clear written protocols for teaching observations.

4.13     Elsewhere, enhancement of assessment procedures and feedback are matters subject to ongoing development, and initiatives such as the mentoring programme are intended to aid new staff to embed good practice. Although the language of enhancement is not routinely used across the College, comprehension of the concept was enthusiastically clarified and shaped during the discussion about journals/reflective logs. The team affirms the recent and ongoing development of journals/reflective logs to enhance learning among the student body.

4.14     Future developments are less well defined and the team recommends that by April 2018 the College should consolidate enhancement activities in order to manage the further development of all learning opportunities.

4.15     On the basis of the documentation provided, meetings with staff and students, and the deliberate steps being taken at the College level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations although the level of risk is moderate because the College needs to further develop strategic leadership and reporting in this area of its activities.

# Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**e-learning**
See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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