



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of The University of Law

October 2017

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at The University of Law. The review took place from 2 - 5 October 2017 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Michael Hyde
- Sabine Spangenberg
- Denis Wright
- Rebekah Osborne (student reviewer).

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)<sup>1</sup> 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](#)<sup>2</sup> and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education](http://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 setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **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 is **commended**.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The use of consistent and comprehensive data, which enables the University to effectively manage the delivery of programmes across locations (Expectations B8, Enhancement).
- The University's engagement with employers to enhance learning opportunities for students (Enhancement).
- The strategic approach to enhancement across the University's delivery sites, which promotes innovation and evaluates the impact on student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

### Affirmation of action being taken

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

- the steps being taken to provide individual feedback to students on all summative assessments (Expectation B6).

## About the provider

The University of Law is a private university owned by Global University Systems (GUS). Its mission is to provide market-leading education that meets the needs of diverse student communities and promotes access to professional careers. The University's strategic aims focus on further growth in programme offerings, diversification of its academic portfolio into business and subjects aligned to law, and on an increased emphasis on internationalisation. The University currently has 6,598 students; 585 are enrolled on undergraduate and 6,013 on postgraduate programmes.

The origins of the University can be traced back to the law tutorial firm, Gibson and Weldon, founded in 1876. In 1962, the Law Society of England and Wales created The College of Law, by merging its own School of Law and Gibson and Weldon. The College of Law obtained its Royal Charter in 1975 and was registered as a charity in 1976 with the aim 'to promote the advancement of legal education and the study of law in all its branches'. It became the major provider of, and examining body for, the Solicitors' Final Examination and a conversion course for non-law graduates, the Common Professional Examination (CPE); this is now commonly known as the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDP). The skills-based Legal Practice Course (LPC) replaced the Solicitors' Final Examination from 1993.

When the Council of Legal Education lost its monopoly of provision of training for intending barristers, the University began to offer the Bar Vocational Course, currently the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) for aspiring barristers. In 2006 the College became the first independent institution to be granted degree awarding powers by the Privy Council, leading to the development of its degree programmes. The online LLM was introduced in 2008 and the LLB undergraduate degree programme was launched in 2012. In the same year the College was awarded full university status and its name was changed to The University of Law.

The University currently has eight centres: Birmingham, Bristol, Chester, Guildford, Leeds, Manchester, and Bloomsbury and Moorgate in London. The University also has arrangements with the Universities of Exeter and Reading for the delivery of some of its programmes. The LLB is delivered in two and three-year versions at seven of the University's centres, with the exception of Moorgate. A four-year part-time version is delivered at Chester and Bloomsbury. All centres deliver the LPC and GDL and the BPTC is being delivered in Birmingham, Bloomsbury and Leeds. The LPC is also delivered as a core element in two alternative master's awards: the MSc in Law, Business and Management, and the LLM in Professional Legal Practice. In each case, the LPC element is augmented by supplemental modules specific to the named award. The GDL and LPC programmes are also delivered at the Universities of Exeter and Reading. The launch of the online LLM (i-LLM) in 2008 marked the beginning of the delivery of a range of online law offerings. The University's portfolio now includes online versions of the GDL (i-GDL) from 2009, the LPC (i-LPC) from 2012, and the LLB (i-LLB) from 2016, which are managed and delivered from Chester. Derivative programmes using modules from the i-LLM have also been developed, leading to MScs in Law, Governance, Risk and Compliance from 2015, and Law and Financial Crime Compliance from 2017.

The University has fully addressed all recommendations from the 2011 QAA Institutional Audit. The University has introduced a revised awards structure which is regularly reviewed. At the same time a new Assessment Policy was developed. Responsibility for both programme design and delivery now lies with the programme team and the University has used a large number and wide range of external contributors in programme approvals. The institutional approach to quality enhancement has been refocused and strengthened

with the introduction of a new senior academic role of Vice-Provost, Academic Enhancement.

Since the last audit the University has also implemented a new governance, comprising the University of Law Board and the Executive Management Board to ensure a clear separation of commercial and academic decision making. It also reviewed its academic policies and supporting protocols. Student representation on key academic committees was introduced in 2013 and the University has also increased the range of opportunities for students to engage in quality assurance and enhancement, culminating in the establishment of the Student Association in 2015. In 2016 the University appointed a Pro Vice-Chancellor, International Development to assist with the development of international partnerships and a draft International Strategy was published in 2017. Since 2012 the University has had a partnership with IE University in Spain, with which it awards a dual degree.

The University developed a strategy to diversify its offering, taking advantage of its synergies with the world of business. As a result, the De Broc School of Business was established in 2015, and three new undergraduate awards were developed: BA Business Management, BA Business and Marketing, and BA Business and Finance. These were supplemented a year later by the BA Business and Human Resource Management and a Foundation Year for all undergraduate Business programmes, along with a range of postgraduate programmes: the MScs in Strategic Business Management, Leadership and International Human Resource Management, International Marketing, and Corporate Financial Management. From 2017 online versions of the MScs are being delivered by InterActive Pro Limited, an organisation specialising in online design and delivery of programmes in partnership with other universities. Their learning platform also houses some of the University's other online law programmes.

Recent developments in postgraduate professional legal education pose a significant challenge to the University. These include planned major changes to the regulations governing the training and qualification regimes for solicitors and barristers. The University has been proactive in aligning its curriculum with the likely changes and is in dialogue with client law firms, clarifying training needs and discussing new programmes to meet future needs.

## Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

### 1 Judgement: The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

**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 University's academic regulations, policies and processes are in alignment with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), award characteristics, national credit frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements. The Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards Policy sets out the expectations, key aims and principles, and procedural approach on managing academic standards.

1.2 A definitive course document (DCD) is required for new or revised programmes, which contains details of the qualification, compliance with the FHEQ, the University's awards framework, and the Higher Education Credit Framework for England. It also contains the programme specification and module descriptors, which set out programme and module learning outcomes and levels, qualification characteristics, Subject Benchmark Statements, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements, and the assessment strategy. The University's regulations, policies and procedures would allow Expectation A1 to be met.

1.3 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined a range of documentation, including the University's academic regulations, policies and protocols; course approval documentation, external examiner reports, documents relating to the annual monitoring cycle; and minutes of deliberative committees concerned with the assurance of standards. The team tested its findings in meetings with University staff.

1.4 The Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards Policy is accessible to staff via the Academic Registry VLE pages. The University engages actively with the FHEQ and the Quality Code. It routinely reviews its policies and supporting protocols to ensure that compliance with the expectations of the Quality Code is maintained. Staff are informed of, and involved in, developments in quality assurance through regular training and review events.

1.5 The University addresses threshold academic standards through its programme design and approval processes. Programme approval and re-approval/periodic review requires examination of modular and programme-level learning outcomes, and confirmation that learning outcomes align with the FHEQ. Approval and review documentation examined clearly articulates the use of national reference points, including relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and the consideration of the appropriateness of the proposed award titles and programme learning outcomes. Staff who met the review team were clear about the use of external reference points during programme design, approval and periodic review and how policy matched the expectations of the Quality Code. Compliance of programmes with the expectations of the Quality Code is confirmed by National Programme Directors.

1.6 The University's criteria for its named qualifications are consistent with the FHEQ. The University does not have interim awards but has exit awards on undergraduate, master's and diploma programmes, all of which have defined characteristics and learning outcomes.

1.7 External examiners are required to comment on the threshold standards set for the University's awards in accordance with the FHEQ and, where relevant, PSRB standards and Subject Benchmark Statements. Although the University's template for external examiner reports does not refer specifically to the FHEQ, external examiners are required to report on whether standards are appropriate to the level of the award in that subject. The external examiner appointment and induction process ensures that external examiners are familiar with, and have experience of, FHEQ levels.

1.8 On the basis of the documentary evidence examined, and from discussions with staff, the review team concludes that the University takes full account of national qualification and credit frameworks in setting and maintaining academic standards, and has effective processes for managing any changes to the Quality Code, to ensure that it operates consistently within the Expectations. In the judgement of the team, Expectation A1 is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.9 The University has oversight of the standards and quality of its education provision through its committee structure. The Academic Board (AB) has overall responsibility for the academic standards and quality of programmes and awards, and for the award regulations. The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) is responsible to AB for ensuring that programmes meet internal and external requirements relating to academic standards, and that the quality of learning opportunities allows students to meet programme learning outcomes. The work of the AB, and its subcommittees, is assured by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC), a committee of the main University of Law Board to which it reports.

1.10 The University's policies on setting and maintaining academic standards form the internal regulatory framework for the award of credit and qualifications. They are published on the University's website and the VLE and reviewed at regular intervals by Academic Registry. The University's quality assurance systems and structures are sufficiently robust and its processes appropriately designed to allow Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.11 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the University's academic regulations, policies and procedures, the terms of reference of Academic Board and its sub-committees, organisational and committee structures and committee minutes. The team tested its findings in meeting with administrative, academic staff and students.

1.12 Academic Board and its subcommittees exercise appropriate oversight of key quality assurance activities to maintain academic standards.

1.13 The University's criteria for the award of degrees, diplomas and certificates are available online. They are aligned with the FHEQ and provide descriptors for levels 4 to 7 of taught degrees. Assessment regulations and associated guidance are published in student programme handbooks, and on the University's virtual learning environment (VLE). Assessment regulations for the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes clearly describe the assessment requirements that students must meet in order to receive an award, and the marks needed to attain a particular classification. The assessment regulations also stipulate the circumstances in which a student may be eligible to apply for a concession. At induction, all students are required to sign a form stating that they have read and understood the assessment regulations. In meetings with the review team, University staff were clear about the use of the regulations and associated processes and procedures. Students who met the team knew what they needed to do to obtain a good or excellent grade.

1.14 The conduct of Examination and Awards Boards is comprehensively described in University protocols and aligns with the assessment regulations. They include the requirements of PSRBs, where applicable.

1.15 The review team considers that the University's academic policies and regulations are comprehensive and aligned with the Expectation of the Quality Code. They are subject to regular evaluation and review and accessible to staff and students. The University has



governance arrangements in place which ensure the effective application of its policies and regulations. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.16 Definitive course documents act as the definitive record for programmes and as a reference point for staff involved with the design, development and delivery of programmes. The DCD also acts as a source of information for external examiners. DCDs are maintained by Academic Registry, together with updates following amendments to programmes. Archives of DCDs are maintained for use by alumni and regulatory bodies.

1.17 Key information from the DCD is published to students in the programme specification, the requirements for which are set out in the protocols for approval, amendment and re-approval. Programme specifications are published on the University's website and relevant information is also provided in student handbooks. Module guides provide students with additional, subject-specific detail. The University's requirements are sufficiently robust, and its processes appropriately designed to allow Expectation A2.2 to be met.

1.18 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined definitive course documents, programme specifications, module guides, student handbooks and other relevant documentation. The team also met with senior and academic staff.

1.19 Programme specifications demonstrate compliance with the University's academic and regulatory frameworks and the requirements set out in the relevant protocols. The National Programme Directors are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of programme specifications and their consistency with Subject Benchmark Statements. Information from the programme specification is included on a product sheet, which is a primary source of programme information, and is available to both staff and students. Staff who met the review team demonstrated a good understanding of programme specifications and their role in quality assurance of standards.

1.20 The University does not provide a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) but each student is provided with a results transcript which refers to the specific programme and modules taken, the marks obtained, and the grading scheme applied. The University updates the transcript for each student at interim publication points or after the relevant Examination or Award Board.

1.21 The review team considers that programme specifications provide a definitive record of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate provision, and that they are approved and modified through consistently applied due processes. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met and that 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 The University's approach to programme approval for taught programmes is set out in the Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and supplemented by detailed protocols for the approval of new programmes, amendment to and re-approval of existing programmes. Programme approval is a two-stage process consisting of strategic approval by the Executive Management Board and an academic approval event convened by the Programme Approval Committee (PAC) involving an approval panel with external input. This framework would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.23 The review team examined process documentation, together with sample reports of programme approvals and modifications, and committee minutes. The team explored these processes through discussions with academic managers and with academic staff involved in proposing and approving programmes.

1.24 The policies and procedures in place for the approval of taught programmes explicitly require externally verified alignment with UK threshold standards as well as alignment with the University's own regulations. The University sets out the internal and external reference points to be considered within programme approval clearly and explicitly, and the process takes account of the FHEQ and credit frameworks, as well as the University's own regulations. Roles and responsibilities are well defined, with the approval panel charged with checks against external reference points, and the Programme Approval Committee ensuring that this has taken place. Externality is embedded, with at least one external representative required on the validation panel. Suitability criteria are appropriate and clearly described.

1.25 Example documentation demonstrated that programme proposals are consistently described and mapped against internal and external reference points, and include clear assessment schemes mapped against learning outcomes. These elements are explicitly reviewed by approval panels with appropriate external membership. Staff at all levels articulate the importance of internal and external reference points within approval processes.

1.26 The University's programme approval and modification procedures take clear account of its own regulations, national qualifications and credit frameworks, and Subject Benchmark Statements when setting academic standards. On this basis, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.27 The University has an institutional framework for awarding credit and qualifications. Programme and module learning outcomes and assessment strategies are mapped against the FHEQ, PSRB requirements and other external reference points and are approved as part of the programme approval process. The University publishes module learning outcomes, assessment methods and grade descriptors in module descriptors. Assessment information is also included in student handbooks.

1.28 The University's award framework specifies the credit requirements at the various FHEQ levels for each award. It also sets out the forms of assessment permitted and the mechanisms through which individual assessment and reassessment tasks are approved. The Assessment Policy stipulates that assessments set must provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes at each FHEQ level. Examination and Award Boards confirm that module and programme learning outcomes have been met and that awards are made at the appropriate standards. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.29 In considering this Expectation the review examined the award framework, policies and procedures with regard to assessment and relevant committee minutes. The team also met with senior staff, academic staff and students.

1.30 Programme and learning outcomes are clearly specified in programme specifications and module descriptors. Module learning outcomes are linked to assessments and a matrix details the link between module and programme learning outcomes. The University has clear processes in place regarding the scrutiny of the production of assessments which ensure that module learning outcomes can be demonstrated through assessment.

1.31 The University has robust internal moderation and external examining processes which ensure that credit is only awarded where module learning outcomes have been met. Examination Board minutes demonstrate strict adherence to the University's assessment regulations.

1.32 On the basis of the evidence examined, the review team concludes that the University has effective procedures in place for the award of credit and qualifications. The Expectation is therefore met, and the associated risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.33 The University's approach to the monitoring and review of taught programmes is laid out in the Programme Monitoring and Review Policy and supporting procedures and protocols. The documents articulate the requirements for review processes to secure academic standards and an outcomes-based approach. The annual monitoring process requires programme teams to review and reflect on the effectiveness of the Teaching and Learning Strategy in enabling students to meet the learning outcomes. In addition, annual monitoring requires that student achievement data, which is provided by the Academic Registry, is reviewed, while longer-term trend data is analysed during periodic review. Benchmarking is conducted against national data where it is available. These processes would allow the Expectation to be met because they explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the University are being maintained.

1.34 The review team explored the annual monitoring and periodic review processes, considering guidance documentation, monitoring and review reports, and minutes of relevant committees. The team discussed review processes with a range of staff involved.

1.35 Review reports demonstrate detailed engagement with academic standards, supported by external examiner comments. The reports consistently follow templates which ensure, in practice, that the required areas have been addressed. Student achievement data analysed by the University and included within annual review reports is detailed and comprehensive and describes how academic achievement varies over time and between different delivery centres, supporting the oversight of standards. Staff with a range of roles within review explained a clear focus on benchmarking student achievement against learning outcomes, which have themselves been set at the appropriate level with reference to external frameworks, although the nature of the sector in which the University's programmes operate means public information about student performance at other providers is often not readily available.

1.36 The evidence demonstrates consistent explicit engagement with UK threshold academic standards in review processes in practice. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.37 The University uses external and independent expertise in a variety of ways for the setting and maintenance of academic standards. It makes use of external expertise in the quality assurance review of proposals for the approval of new programmes and as panel members on programme approval panels. The University also draws on the expertise of employers and PSRBs in the design of new provision and the review of existing programmes.

1.38 External examiners are used in the scrutiny of assessment, review of marking and standards and the deliberations of Examination and Award Boards. External examiners submit an annual report which specifically comments on the achievement of academic standards, and processes are in place for the consideration of external examiner reports and the development of action plans in response to any recommendations made. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.39 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined programme approval protocols, approval panel reports, external examiner reports and relevant committee minutes. The team also met with senior and academic staff.

1.40 Approval panel composition confirms that the University routinely involves external experts in programme approval. Programme approval panel minutes demonstrate that the University makes appropriate use of external expertise in the approval of new programmes. The University has a close working relationship with professional bodies and is receptive to proposals to enhance the curriculum. Employers who met the review team confirmed that the University draws on their expertise in the review of programmes. For example, the University expanded its module offerings to include professional skills in response to suggestions from the profession. In specific circumstances the University also seeks specialist external advice on a consultancy basis for the review of programmes to identify issues or problems and suggest solutions.

1.41 External examiners are regularly involved in the approval of assessments and there are robust processes in place for the consideration of their reports and action planning at programme and institutional level. Minutes of Examination Boards confirm their input into the decision-making process.

1.42 Overall, the University makes appropriate use of external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, and that the risk is low.

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

## The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.43 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. There are no recommendations, affirmations or good practice in this judgement area. The review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 The University's principles for the design, development and approval of programmes, governing all of its programmes and awards, are set out in the Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy. Information about how these operate in practice is described in more detailed protocols which set out appropriate criteria for consideration of proposals. Roles and responsibilities are articulated clearly and include student representatives and independent external expertise.

2.2 The University operates a two-stage process for programme approval that separates strategic approval, via the Executive Management Board, from academic validation, via the Programme Approval Committee. The operation of the process is supported by Academic Registry. The process for approval of programmes delivered with others is the same, albeit there are additional processes for approval of suitable partners and supplementary documentation required to address the additional risks involved (see paragraph 2.89). Academic Board has strategic oversight of the programme design and approval processes. This framework would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team examined process documentation, together with sample reports of programme approvals and modifications, and committee minutes. The team met with staff who oversee programme validation, as well as staff and students involved in validation panels, to understand how these processes operate in practice.

2.4 The processes for the design, development and approval of programmes are clear and explicit, and assign appropriate roles and responsibilities. The two-stage approval process ensures that academic decision making is independent of, albeit informed by, strategic financial considerations. Roles and responsibilities within programme approval are widely understood by staff, and guidance and training are available, particularly through Academic Registry, which supports those involved.

2.5 The initial strategic approval stage ensures that all proposals are developed with the support of the Executive Management Board, while the documentation for this stage includes a useful summary of the proposal's position within the internal awards framework, ensuring clarity before formal validation processes begin. Once the details of a proposal have been developed, but prior to formal approval, an informal document review takes place in the form of a panel session including an external examiner. This acts as a sense check and allows documentary issues to be ironed out, which in turn allows formal panels to focus on issues of quality and standards.

2.6 Example documentation from validation panels demonstrates that detailed programme documentation is presented, with panels having the scope for in-depth discussion. Reporting on this process is detailed, clear and consistent, demonstrating vigour and breadth in the consideration of proposals. The programme approval process includes a clear role for student input and representation, and the University is considering mechanisms



to involve students earlier in the development of programmes, prior to formal approval. Approval panels must also have at least one external representative, and panel reports demonstrate that they have a significant role in panel discussions.

2.7 Minor programme modifications are recorded and monitored by Academic Registry to guard against the possibility of significant cumulative change that has not been subject to oversight via the agreed formal processes.

2.8 The University operates clear and consistent processes for programme approval which are effective in maintaining vigour and in which individuals are clear, in practice, about their roles within the process. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.9 The University operates an Admissions Policy which is mapped against the expectations of the Quality Code. It sets out the principles and criteria for recruiting, selecting and admitting students to University programmes and is accessible to all via the University website. The policy, along with entry criteria, are regularly reviewed and updated. The policy also directs students to the University's External Persons Complaints Policy, should prospective students wish to make a complaint.

2.10 Students apply to the University through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the Central Applications Board (CAB), or the Bar Student Application Service (BARSAS) depending on their chosen programme of study. The University also has its own application portal for any students who fall outside of these categories. The University's admissions team is located centrally within the Registry. This team is divided into two sub-teams, with responsibility for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, respectively. Members within each team assume responsibility for named programmes to ensure that the requisite expertise to fully support students throughout the admissions process is available. The admissions team also includes a dedicated admissions processes team. Their function is to monitor, maintain and review the University's system development to ensure that it is fit for purpose. They also review and update the admissions policy annually.

2.11 The admissions teams utilise a product sheet which captures information relating to University programmes. All members of staff use the product sheet to respond to applicant queries, ensuring that information provided to applicants is consistent and up to date. Sheets are also archived annually so that information from previous years can be checked and revisited in future.

2.12 The Admissions Committee, chaired by the Director of Design and Assessment, meets fortnightly to discuss and respond to operational issues. It reports directly to Academic Board. The committee also implements the strategic aims approved by the Executive Committee and Academic Board and responds to operational queries. The clear admissions processes and procedures, the strategic and operational role of the Admissions Committee and an admissions function which is supported by well-inducted and trained staff would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.13 In reviewing the University's recruitment and admissions practices, the team considered the relevant policies, procedures and minutes of the Admissions Committee, and met a wide range of staff and students.

2.14 The University's Admissions Policy is fair and transparent. The University undertook an extensive benchmarking process in relation to entry criteria, in which they mapped qualifications from over 100 countries in order to enable applications from a diverse student body who successfully met the entry criteria. The admissions proposal document provides a clear outline to staff of the University's approach to the admissions process.

2.15 Students are recruited in line with approved entry criteria and are invited to disclose any learning disabilities. Students who met the review team confirmed that the admissions process was clear and commented positively both on the admissions support and information that they received from University staff, and the additional support received once enrolled as a result of such disclosures.

2.16 All applications are drawn together by the University's Customer Management Database (CMD). Admissions decisions are also recorded on the database. This ensures that all applications are treated in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. Housing applications on a CMD allows efficient tracking of applications and decisions and enables accurate reporting to be carried out. Reports from the Admissions Committee to Academic Board are strongly underpinned by robust data to inform strategic decision making. Admission data also form part of the end-of-course statistics which enable the University to measure the effectiveness of its delivery.

2.17 Admissions offers are made exclusively by admissions staff, ensuring consistency of approach and appropriate institutional oversight. New members of admissions staff receive a comprehensive induction. Continuous training and development is delivered through scheduled phone training, attendance at workshops held both internally and externally, and engagement with external stakeholders and PSRBs.

2.18 The review team concludes that the University's recruitment and admissions practices ensure a robust, transparent and consistent approach to the implementation of the Admissions Policy and decision making. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

**Findings**

2.19 The University has articulated a Teaching and Learning Policy and a Teaching and Learning Strategy, the core of which is also found in the student handbook. The Teaching and Learning Policy sets out the expectations and aims of the University in relation to learning and teaching across all its programmes. The key aim is to provide an approach to learning and teaching that develops students 'to become resourceful professionals who can compete in the fast-changing world'. The Teaching and Learning Strategy which implements the policy has the goal of enhancing the student experience and ensuring that students are work-ready. The University also aims to foster a culture of continuous development of, and innovation in, learning and teaching in partnership with students.

2.20 The Teaching and Learning Policy is supported by a range of ancillary policies, all of which articulate the University's approach to the enhancement of learning opportunities and the review of teaching practices. Principles and procedures for the support of the professional development of teaching staff are detailed in the Staff Development Policy, and the Peer Observation of Teaching Policy states the key objectives of teaching observation. The Scholarship Development Policy articulates scholarly activity in the context of the University's ethos and work and outlines its strategic approach to scholarship, whereas the Professoriate Policy details the requirements for the appointment of senior academic staff.

2.21 The Academic Enhancement Committee is responsible for articulating and systematically reviewing and enhancing the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices at institutional level. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.22 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined a range of policies and procedures related to learning and teaching and staff development. The team also met with senior and academic staff, and students, to explore their implementation and effectiveness.

2.23 The University's learning and teaching policies and strategies are available to staff and students on the University's website and the VLE. The University actively promotes a shared understanding of them among staff through a regular review of policies and procedures involving a wide range of staff, and previously also through a series of challenge seminars, where the University's approach to relevant aspects of the Quality Code was reviewed and tested. In addition, Centre Learning and Teaching Coordinators disseminate policy and strategy locally.

2.24 The University provides clear definitions of teaching staff and their roles and appoints appropriately qualified staff. Almost all tutors are qualified solicitors or barristers and the vast majority also have post-qualification experience of legal practice. A small number are still working in part-time legal practice. This is supported by the University's Contact with Practice Policy which encourages and supports tutors to make regular visits to practice. Newly appointed members of teaching staff are supported well. All new staff follow a comprehensive induction process consisting of a variety of activities. They are also

provided with key information including policies and procedures that govern learning and teaching. New staff are mentored and have the opportunity to observe teaching delivered by experienced staff. They meet regularly with their manager and mentor during the first six months after their appointment and there is a supportive open-door policy. In the first three years of their employment new staff are also encouraged to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education which the University delivers in-house.

2.25 In addition to the roles of Professor and Associate Professor, the University recently established the title of Teaching Fellow which recognises high level performance in learning and teaching. Staff are also encouraged to apply for fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) for promotion to senior tutor. They engage well in this process, with an above sector average number of academic staff being HEA fellows.

2.26 Teaching quality at the University is high. The outcomes of the latest National Student Survey (NSS) demonstrate a high satisfaction rate of students with the quality of teaching. Programme questionnaires and teaching quality evaluation forms for individual tutors also record consistently high scores for teaching quality. Students who met the review team confirmed that they are very satisfied with the teaching they receive. External examiner reports praise the high standard of teaching and innovative use of pedagogy. The quality of teaching and high student satisfaction is also confirmed through the award of gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework exercise. To acknowledge and reward teaching excellence the University introduced the Teacher of the Year award in 2015. In the same year the Student Association established its annual teaching awards.

2.27 The University routinely reviews the quality of teaching through a variety of mechanisms including observation of teaching. It uses peer and management observations of teaching effectively to ensure consistency of teaching quality and pedagogy across the various delivery sites, to enhance teaching quality and to support innovation and change. The process allows tutors to engage in reflective practice with constructive feedback. It also identifies areas for staff development and staff gave examples of development activities that originated from the teaching observation process. Academic staff confirmed that observations of teaching aided to identify potential problems of delivery which could effectively be addressed in a timely fashion. Evaluation and reflection on teaching practice also take place as part of the annual programme monitoring process. The University routinely gathers and evaluates quantitative and qualitative data on student progression and achievement and teaching quality using a range of sources including the results of student surveys, including the NSS, and the recently piloted teaching quality evaluation forms (see Expectation B8). This informs centre-based training and results in a range of learning and development seminars.

2.28 The University takes a strategic approach to the dissemination and sharing of good practice across its delivery centres. The annual Learning and Teaching Conference provides the institutional-level forum for the dissemination and sharing of good practice and thus contributes to the further enhancement of teaching and learning. Material from the conference is made available to all teaching staff on the VLE. Academic staff also attend regional, national and international conferences and their reports on these events are also placed on the VLE to disseminate sector-wide best practice across teaching teams and delivery centres. The VLE also houses bespoke training materials, reports from centre learning and development seminars, subject-specific updates, and general information on learning, teaching and assessments. In addition, the Centre Learning and Teaching Coordinators disseminate good practice locally.

2.29 The University provides extensive support for the professional development of academic staff that enables it to maintain academic excellence and enhance the student learning experience. It has established a Staff Development Review Group to oversee and

implement the Staff Development Policy. The group is undertaking a range of projects including the review and audit of current practices, and identification of resource and training needs, and provides regular updates to Academic Board. The recently established Academic Development Investment Fund is the formal process by which staff can apply for financial support for undertaking postgraduate programmes relevant to their role. The University is currently funding a number of staff to undertake master's and doctoral-level qualifications. Plans for the dissemination of outputs are included in the applications for funding. Staff can also apply for financial support to attend other external training programmes that are relevant to their role.

2.30 The in-house Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) is available to all teaching staff from September 2017 and provides an opportunity to undertake a postgraduate teaching qualification. The University also provides an extensive programme of academic staff development sessions focusing on learning and teaching across the delivery centres, including enhancement seminars delivered by the Vice-Provost, Academic Enhancement. There is also a series of learning and teaching events in each centre. The University has started to record training relevant across programmes and centres and made it available to all staff on the VLE. There are mandatory staff development activities for teaching staff following the introduction of new programmes or revisions to programmes. These are in addition to the standard centre-based training events. Academic staff who met the review team confirmed that appropriate professional development opportunities are available to them and that the University is supportive of their development.

2.31 The University promotes subject-specific and educational scholarship. Strategic priorities are identified by the Executive Management Board and then discussed with staff. It is expected that academic staff engage in scholarly activities, and as part of the annual performance development review process, reflect upon and evaluate their scholarly activities. Priorities for scholarly activity are agreed and refined annually between the member of staff and their line manager. The University is in the process of establishing a Legal Practice Research Institute to engage in practice-based research. Research clusters will be formed to review the challenges facing the legal sector and trends in legal provision.

2.32 The Academic Enhancement Committee routinely considers and evaluates the effectiveness of teaching practices and the general student experience. As a result, new practices have been introduced, including regular learning and development seminars in delivery centres and the dissemination of papers from external conferences attended to all staff through the VLE. The comprehensive evaluation and review of policies and practices covering the student learning experience has led to a wide range of projects to support the enhancement of student learning and support, including the development of a Student Experience Strategy and the use of technology-enhanced learning and teaching, including artificial intelligence.

2.33 The review team found evidence that the University has effective systems in place for reviewing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities and teaching practices, including processes for considering and acting upon feedback from a variety of sources. Systems for reviewing the learning environment, and for supporting staff development, are equally effective. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.34 The Widening Participation and Diversity Strategy commits the University to delivering programmes to students from a wide range of backgrounds, through a variety of delivery modes, and to supporting them through their studies. The Enabling Student Development and Achievement Policy articulates the framework of expectations within which the University seeks to enable student development and achievement before, during, and after their period of study. The recently reviewed Student Charter sets out the mutual rights and responsibilities of the University and students.

2.35 The Enabling Student Development and Achievement Policy is supported by ancillary policies such as the Disability Support Policy, which lays out the University's approach to facilitating access to its higher education provision for students who have support needs due to disability, specific learning difficulties or other conditions. Individual disability support agreements detail the arrangements put in place for students who require this type of support.

2.36 The Student Employability Service Policy sets out the framework for the provision of support to enable student development and achievement in the area of employability. Offering a high quality Employability Service is central to the University's aim of supporting students to maximise their personal and professional potential. The University's strategic commitment to the role of employability in enabling student development is encapsulated in the Employability Promise to students.

2.37 The University makes available information about student support and the resources that it provides in digital format. Students access support such as the disability and learning support and the careers and employability services at the various delivery sites. For distance learning students there is a 'virtual student centre' with tailored content and access to events and services across the University.

2.38 A new centralised Wellbeing Team, which includes the Counselling Service and a Mental Health Advisor, has been set up to manage both general student wellbeing and more complex needs. The University has also introduced new roles such as the Head of Student Support Services to strengthen the management of student support. The Operations Board has overall responsibility for the management of services and facilities relevant to supporting students. Processes are in place to monitor and review the effectiveness of the support provided. The arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.39 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined policies and procedures for student support. The team also met with senior, academic and professional support staff, and students, to explore the effectiveness of the student support arrangements in place.

2.40 Students are provided with sufficient and current information about learning opportunities and support arrangements in the student handbooks. Students who met the review team confirmed that they were aware of the support available, and that the necessary information can be found via the student hub on the VLE which, other than the student handbooks, also provides information about resources and opportunities available locally, including the ability to sign up for extracurricular activities and employability events.

2.41 The University aims to avoid the creation of unnecessary barriers for those with a disability or learning difficulty by making adjustments for students declaring a disability or learning difficulty in respect to tuition and assessment arrangements. Equitable student development and achievement is appropriately supported by the Disability Support Service and the Wellbeing Team. Comprehensive information for students with learning and disability support requirements is available on the University's website. Students are encouraged to declare their requirements at every stage of the application and induction processes. The University makes use of advanced technology to assist students with declared disabilities. A dedicated team of specialists contacts students who disclose a requirement, and implements a disability support agreement prior to the programme start date. Adjustments agreed are disseminated to relevant staff. The Disability Review Group approves the support arrangements to be put in place for each student. Students who met the review team were generally satisfied with the arrangements. External examiner reports comment positively on the operation on the conduct of the Special Needs Board.

2.42 Student transition is effectively facilitated via a range of mechanisms such as pre-induction activities, a student buddy scheme, personal tutoring and careers advice. All students receive a comprehensive and supportive induction. Undergraduate programmes have an extended induction period to facilitate transition into higher education. The University provides appropriate academic and pastoral support to students. Each student is allocated a personal tutor whom they meet during induction and at regular intervals thereafter. Distance learning students have access to a supervisor. The system works well and is valued by students. The University also offers an extensive study skills programme, both face to face and online, which is well received by students.

2.43 Study facilities in the form of computing, library and other information services are fit for purpose and appreciated by students. Each centre employs a qualified librarian to oversee the running of the library and who also provides training to students and staff in the use of information resources via workshops and through online materials. The adequacy of learning resources is reviewed regularly, and firm plans are in place for the deployment of a new library service platform to improve access to resources and for the development of a framework for digital literacy.

2.44 The University operates a comprehensive student support system with a strong emphasis on employability. For the undergraduate law and business programmes employability activities are integrated into the curriculum and an employability achievement record allows students to reflect on the skills and experience gained. This is supplemented by a range of employer talks, fairs and events. The Employability Service and extracurricular activities further enhance students' skills. The personalised face-to-face careers support offered by the Employability Service allows every student to be treated as an individual, and to take into account personal circumstances. This student-centred approach places the needs of the student at the heart of the interaction. A comprehensive online student employability programme, careers information and pro bono resources on the VLE enable students to prepare well for a career in law. Many of these resources remain available for alumni for a fixed time, thus aiding graduates' progression in their working lives. The extensive offer of pro bono and mentoring opportunities gives students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience and develop and apply their employability skills. Students value these opportunities highly and the uptake is high. In addition, the Employability Network brings together recent alumni, current students and employers.

2.45 The University monitors the effectiveness of its support services as part of the annual monitoring procedure, and in addition to this holds regular meetings to allow the respective teams to liaise. Students who met the review team confirmed a supportive learning environment and commented positively on the parity of the student experience and



equitability of support provision. NSS survey results also demonstrate high satisfaction with student support arrangements and learning resources. The 2017 TEF statement notes the strong links to employers and the legal profession in teaching and extracurricular activities.

2.46 The University has in place effective arrangements for student support and the provision of learning resources which it monitors and evaluates regularly. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated risk is low.

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

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.47 The University seeks to engage students through a range of mechanisms including opportunities to participate in course development and approval, provide feedback on their experience of learning and teaching, engage with external examiner reports, and champion the student voice at all levels of the University through a representational structure and membership of strategic committees. The University has developed a Student Engagement Policy and protocols which outline the implementation of the policy. A range of surveys capture the student voice. These include a first impressions survey, end-of-course survey, teaching quality evaluation forms, other institutional surveys and the NSS.

2.48 In 2015 the University formed a Student Association to engage students further in the assurance and enhancement of their learning experience. The Association is led by the President, and supported by an Executive Officer and a Clubs, Societies and Events Officer. Both roles are remunerated, with the latter being a permanent salaried member of staff at the University. The Association's structure, remit, functions and responsibilities are outlined in its constitution, which was democratically agreed by the Student Parliament and approved by Academic Board. The Student Association has a Board of Trustees which governs the affairs of the Association and is made up of elected student and staff members. All students automatically become members of the Student Association unless they opt out.

2.49 There is an established student representative system. Two representatives are elected from each class to represent student views at Student Staff Liaison (SSL) Committees throughout the year. Class representatives are eligible to be elected as course representatives who sit on the Student Parliament, which is the main decision-making body of the Student Association. Each University delivery centre also has a Centre Officer to champion the student voice. The University has put in place the opportunities and mechanisms for student participation at all levels which would allow this Expectation to be met.

2.50 The review team tested the University's approach to the engagement of students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their learning experience through a review of the student submission, relevant policies and procedures, committee minutes, and student survey data. The team also met with staff, students, student representatives and members of the Student Association.

2.51 The Student Association has its own strategic plan and is responsible for embedding student participation and engagement at all levels of the University. It does so through its clearly articulated and embedded student representation structure. The President and Executive Officer sit on the Academic Board and other strategic committees where they champion the student voice and perspective by fully participating in discussions and making regular reports.

2.52 The student representative system works well. Class and course representatives gather feedback from their peers face to face during classes and through email and social media group messaging platforms to put forward student views at Student Staff Liaison Meetings, on strategic committees and at the Student Parliament. They also close the feedback loop by reporting back on actions the University has taken in response to student feedback. Class representatives receive training from the Executive Officer of the Student

Association and online training is available for those who cannot attend or are enrolled on online programmes. However, engagement of student representatives with training is variable.

2.53 Students have ample opportunity to feed back on the quality of their academic experience through a range of surveys and focus groups. Students who met the review team commented positively on the opportunities for feedback and engagement with the University through these mechanisms. The University appreciates students' feedback, and staff and students cited a number of examples where student feedback has led to enhancements in the student learning experience. In response to feedback received, the National Programme Directors formulate 'You Said We Did' reports to inform students of any actions to be taken and to close the feedback loop. Responses are published on a VLE microsite for students to access easily. Students value this information and commented positively on the effectiveness of communication.

2.54 Students highlighted the need for more organised social events, networking and societies. In response, the Student Association recruited a full-time Clubs, Societies and Events Officer to ensure that students could benefit from a holistic University experience. Going forward, the Student Association wishes to adopt a more traditional Student Union model.

2.55 Overall, students are actively engaged at all levels individually and collectively in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience through a variety of mechanisms. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.56 The University has an Assessment Policy and a draft Assessment Strategy which apply to all programmes of study. They set out appropriate principles and expectations and their implementation is supported by operational protocols and overseen by Academic Board. Assessment types are, in many cases, prescribed by regulatory bodies, and wherever possible the approach to assessment is informed by real-world tasks. Individual assessments are mapped to the module learning outcomes within assessment briefs, while the module outcomes are in turn mapped to the programme outcomes and any relevant external reference points. This ensures alignment between the assessments and the approved programme outcomes. The way in which Examination and Award Boards conduct themselves and make decisions is articulated in the Examination Board protocols. There is no provision for condonation or compensation of marks.

2.57 The assessment regulations for all programmes are maintained by Academic Registry, and are reviewed annually with direct oversight of Academic Board, prior to being made available to students. Many of the detailed assessment rules, including pass marks, reassessment opportunities and timings, and consequences of failure, are expressed in programme assessment regulations. This is because many of the University's programmes are highly regulated, and flexibility at programme level is required to accommodate the varying requirements of the regulatory bodies. Principles through which the University recognises previous learning are clearly articulated in the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and on the RPL application form itself. The processes followed are explained in the Recognition of Prior Learning Protocol.

2.58 High-level principles underpinning assessment feedback are explained in policy documentation, with the details of implementation devolved to the programme level. The University's Student Discipline Regulations define unacceptable practice in relation to assessments, while the Student Discipline Policy sets out the procedures by which the University manages individual cases. These are reiterated within assessment documentation for students. These policies and processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.59 The review team analysed the assessment policy and associated procedures, and scrutinised example documentation arising from the marking and moderation process. The team also met staff involved in the development of the assessment strategy and policy, as well as a range of staff and students involved in the day-to-day processes of assessment.

2.60 The Assessment Policy and associated policies and protocols describe clear and appropriate underlying principles that apply consistently across programmes and centres and articulate a persistent focus on students meeting the relevant learning outcomes. In relation to Recognition of Prior Learning, the evidence demonstrates a clear focus on whether and how students have met the learning outcomes in practice, in order for RPL to be awarded.

2.61 There is a clear four-stage process for marking and moderation which defines the approach taken across programmes and centres. The process is transparent and offers the

opportunity to secure consistency of practice across different delivery sites, as well as to inform reflection and enhancement. It comprises standardisation, including external examiner approval of the marking scheme/guidance and an internal conference call of all moderators; marking itself; moderation, which includes second marking of a sample and statistical analysis; and external examiner review of the outcomes.

2.62 Detailed drafts of the intended assessments and their scheduling is included in design briefs, which allows any training or development needs relating to assessment regimes to be identified early. New staff receive assessment training and are assigned a mentor.

2.63 Example documentation demonstrated rigour in the application of the University's marking and moderation protocols, with each stage being documented in detail. Staff described the process as supportive, including regular contact between assessors which allows them to test their understanding of the marking standard. The evolving process is summarised in a statistical dashboard which provides real-time monitoring statistics. Staff gave examples of how this helped, in practice, to secure consistency across the University's delivery centres, providing oversight of the marking process and of the performance of the student cohorts. For example, the system can be used to give early notice if an assessor is marking at a different level from the standard, or if a cohort is performing poorly in a particular assessment, allowing the relevant Programme Director to intervene (see Enhancement Expectation).

2.64 The University places emphasis on formative assessment, which is typically individually marked with personalised feedback provided. This is positively received by students, and National Programme Directors worked with the Student Association to create a feedback pack which articulates the different kinds of feedback and how students can use feedback effectively. However, for summative assessments, the University does not commit to providing individual written feedback to students unless they fail the assessment, the rationale being to focus resources where they are most needed. While in practice some summative assessments do result in individual feedback, students articulated, both in the student submission and in meetings with the review team, a desire for consistency in the provision of individual feedback, to ensure that they are able to learn from their performance in summative assessments. The University acknowledged the desirability of this to support student learning, and has instituted a focus group to assess the viability of a new approach, while piloting a commitment to personalised feedback for all summative work on the undergraduate LLB programme. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken by the University to provide individual feedback to students on all summative assessments.

2.65 Assessment follows rigorous prescribed procedures, with a clear focus on an outcomes-based approach, is clearly documented at all stages of the process, and is given strong oversight across centres with a particular focus on statistical monitoring. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.66 The University appoints external examiners to its programmes to oversee individual modules or groups of modules. For some programmes it also engages a Lead Institutional Examiner with oversight of the whole programme. External examiners for the Bar Professional Training Course are appointed and managed by the PSRB and the annual report is submitted to the regulator and then forwarded to the University.

2.67 The University has an External Examiner Policy which articulates the role of external examiners and the mechanisms for their appointment. Appointments are reviewed by the External Examiner Approval Panel and are subject to final approval from the Academic Board. The criteria for the appointment are clearly specified. The External Examiner Policy also states the reporting requirements and details the process for the consideration of the reports by the University. To support external examiners the University has developed Guidance for External Examiners. The document outlines the terms and conditions of appointment, examining duties and the areas to be covered in the annual report.

2.68 External examiner reports are considered by the relevant programme team and through the University's quality assurance mechanisms. External examiners receive a response to issues raised in their report from the programme team. Reports are made available to students through the VLE. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.69 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined policies and procedures for external examining, guidance and support material for external examiners, external examiner reports and relevant committee minutes evidencing the consideration of their reports. The team also met with senior and academic staff, and students.

2.70 The University has robust mechanisms in place for external examiners to fulfil their duties and to assure the University that academic standards are being maintained and remain aligned with national frameworks. Terms and conditions of external examiners' appointments are clearly set out in their contracts, including termination of the appointment. The University employs a conscientious approach to the appointment of external examiners and takes appropriate steps to avoid conflicts of interest. At the start of their appointment new external examiners receive an appropriate induction and the University ensures that both new and returning external examiners are provided with all relevant assessment information and have access to programme and assessment-related material via the VLE. External examiners are also given a clear timetable for when Examination Board meetings are to be held and which they are obliged to attend.

2.71 Adequate processes are in place to assure that external examiners receive sufficient evidence to be able to endorse the outcomes of the assessment processes. The University also has a clear and effective process for agreeing assessments in each module by external examiners and for endorsing the overall marking standard both prior to and during the Examination Boards. For this purpose the University supplies external examiners with appropriately sized samples of assessed work, including samples across the various mark ranges. They receive similar sample sets from each delivery centre in order to gauge the consistency of the marking process within the specific centre and across the University as a whole.

2.72 External examiners participate actively in the deliberations of the Examination and Award Boards. The University also uses their expertise to refine its policies and practice. For example, a discussion on poor student performance at the Examination Board led to the refinement of the University's Attendance and Monitoring Policy for the LLB programme. External examiners are also routinely included in the quality assurance review stage of the programme approval process with positive effects for learning, teaching and assessment.

2.73 The annual report template is designed to report on academic, administrative and quality assurance issues. External examiners are also invited to comment on areas of best practice and enhancement opportunities. Reports examined by the review team demonstrate the effective use of the templates. There are clear processes for the consideration of external examiner reports and the provision of responses to any recommendations made. Reports are routinely considered by the Academic Board, and the Academic Registry produces a comprehensive summary of issues arising from external examiner reports. This acts as the medium for the University to give full and serious consideration to comments and recommendations and forms the basis of the action plans formulated by the respective programme teams. The programme teams' action plans are incorporated into the University's annual monitoring process, with Academic Board monitoring progress. The responses to external examiner comments reveal that the University is responsive to their comments, and staff who met the review team gave examples of changes that had been made as a result.

2.74 External examiner reports are made available to students via the VLE. In their written submission students commented that the awareness of the availability of external examiner reports ought to be improved. While students who met the review team knew where external examiner reports were published, they acknowledged that they had not read them.

2.75 The University has robust processes in place for the appointment of external examiners, the management of the external examination process and the consideration of the resulting reports. The review team concludes that the University makes appropriate use of external examiners. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.76 The University's approach to monitoring and review is set out in the Programme Monitoring and Review Policy and related procedures, with operational details described in associated protocols. Built on a foundation of continuous review, the process includes formal annual programme monitoring reported directly to Academic Board, alongside a summary report drawing together common themes and outcomes from across programmes. These programme reviews are complemented by a range of other thematic reports, including those on the student experience and employability. Periodic Review, every six years, takes a broader look at the provision and is linked with programme revalidation. Clearly defined data sets are provided to inform review processes, with responsibility for the production of, and reflection on, that data clearly articulated. This framework would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.77 The review team examined policy documentation concerning review processes and scrutinised example reports, including data, produced at different stages. The team also met with staff overseeing these processes, and discussed how they work in practice with staff and students involved. The team also reviewed the minutes of meetings where the outcomes of review processes were discussed.

2.78 The University has well-defined review processes in place which operate on appropriate timescales. Clear roles and responsibilities enable accountability while prescribed data sets and report templates facilitate consistency and breadth of coverage. The University's culture of enhancement (see Enhancement Expectation) is well embedded in practice, providing the foundation for the formal review processes. Programme and periodic review reports show that the process engages in detailed scrutiny of the quality of the provision. In the first year of a new programme, the University requires additional interim reporting to the Academic Board, with the reports typically drawing on feedback from student focus groups and staff. In general, Academic Board takes a detailed interest in the outcomes of review processes based on a wide range of information available to it.

2.79 The evidence base for programme annual monitoring includes data on student enrolment, progression and achievement, external examiner reports, student feedback including questionnaire results, any relevant complaints, and feedback from teaching staff. The University's expectations with respect to the use of data are well understood by staff at all levels. Data is available to show student feedback and performance in detail, and how this varies between cohorts, both across centres and over time, enabling staff to effectively manage the delivery of programmes across sites. While such data is collated for formal annual monitoring, there are examples where the data is used in real time to identify and address issues well in advance of formal review. For example, during marking and moderation, assessor and student performance is summarised in real time in a statistical dashboard as the process evolves. This allows National Programme Directors to identify where intervention might be required to ensure consistency of marking across centres, or to provide additional feedback and support to a cohort that is underperforming in a particular area. There is a consistently high level of detail in both the datasets themselves and in the reflective analyses within programme review reports. The use of consistent and comprehensive data, which enables the University to effectively manage the delivery of programmes across locations, is a feature of **good practice**.



2.80 The periodic review process is similarly data-driven, with panel reports demonstrating engagement with a wide range of qualitative and quantitative evidence. External examiner reports are summarised to provide evidence for the panel, and panels include an external representative, as well as a student.

2.81 The University's review framework provides for a comprehensive series of individual programme and cross-cutting review reports, built on a foundation of continuous review, supported by defined data and evidence, and implemented carefully and consistently in practice. The Expectation is met, and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.82 The University has developed distinct policies and procedures for dealing with academic appeals and complaints which are reviewed regularly to ensure continuing alignment with the Quality Code. They are published on the University's VLE along with comprehensive student guides. Responsibility for the review and implementation of the Academic Appeals and Review Policy, in addition to tracking the progress of appeals and maintaining central records, lies with the Academic Registrar. The University employs a Complaints Officer who provides administrative support for the process and training for Investigating Officers, and keeps records of the outcomes of all formal and informal complaints. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.83 The review team tested the operation of the current procedures by scrutinising the relevant policies and procedures, the guidance available to staff and students, the relevant University reports and meeting notes evaluating complaints and appeals, and Academic Board minutes. The team met with staff involved in the appeals and complaints process, and with a cross-section of the student body.

2.84 Policies and procedures for academic appeals and complaints are clear and accessible to all staff and students. All stages of the process are clearly outlined in the policies, on the respective formal complaints and appeals forms, and in the student guides, including signposting to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) in all instances.

2.85 Students are directed to resolve complaints informally in the first instance. The University records all instances where a student engages with the appeals and complaints procedures, formally and informally, or contacts a University Complaints Officer, and a record is kept of all formal and informal complaints. The overall number of academic appeals and complaints for the current academic year is 121. Of these, 21 were formal, 67 were informal, 11 were ineligible and there were 22 enquiries. The overall number of formal complaints has remained steady since 2014 with fewer than 25 formal complaints per academic year. Most complaints relate to service issues or financial matters. Between 2011 and 2017, 23 complainants have applied to the OIA for review. The University monitors and reviews the outcomes of appeals and complaints to inform strategic decisions and action planning. Academic Board routinely considers reviews of all complaints and appeals in order to maintain institutional oversight of the process. Students who met the review team displayed varying levels of awareness around appeals and complaints. Few students were aware of the process involved in making an academic appeal or complaint but some were able to indicate where they would find this information should they require it. Staff explained that information regarding academic appeals was sent to students with their examination results.

2.86 Overall, the review team concludes that the University has effective procedures and mechanisms for dealing with academic appeals and student complaints, and that these are well handled in practice. The procedures are fair, transparent, accessible and subject to regular review. Therefore, Expectation B9 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.87 The University's Strategic Five Year Business Plan (2017- 2022) includes international growth and the Strategic Academic Plan (2016 - 2020) aims to strengthen existing partnerships, develop new alliances and partnerships to complement and enhance the University's academic portfolio, and build relationships with strategic overseas partners. The draft International Strategy outlines the University's international strategic goals, key drivers and strategic themes.

2.88 The University's Managing Higher Education with Others Policy aligns with the Quality Code, and associated protocols describe how new partnership proposals are considered. The Working with Others Committee (WwO) is the main committee responsible for partnership arrangements and its role is to safeguard academic standards and to assure the quality of learning opportunities. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, International Development oversees the development of all overseas academic partnerships and sits on the University's Executive Management Board and the WwO Committee.

2.89 All proposals for new partnership arrangements are seen by the WwO Committee, so that a decision can be made as to whether they fall within the scope of the Managing Higher Education with Others Policy. New arrangements outside the remit of the policy are referred to the Third Party Relationships Sub-Committee (TPR). The key factor determining which provision is in scope is whether the achievement of the learning outcomes for a module or programme is dependent on the arrangement.

2.90 The Executive Management Board and the University's Chief Financial Officer consider the business case for a partnership proposal. Academic approval for a proposal is undertaken separately by the Programme Approval Committee on behalf of Academic Board. Due diligence is signed off by the Executive Management Board.

2.91 Credit and award bearing programmes submit an annual monitoring report to the Academic Board. External examiners are appointed for all partnership arrangements, which are also subject to annual programme monitoring and periodic review. The above arrangements, policies and procedures for working with others would allow Expectation B10 to be met.

2.92 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined relevant documentation, including strategies, the University's procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of collaborative provision, and the minutes of relevant committees where reports of partner and programme approvals are received and considered. The team tested its findings in meetings with senior and academic staff and with students on a collaborative programme.

2.93 The University monitors and regularly reviews its policies and procedures for working with others. The associated protocols are very comprehensive and include a checklist, a site visit report form, and a risk assessment tool, which is used to record potential risks. Audit trails for two recently agreed arrangements demonstrate the robustness of the approval process and its alignment with University policy and protocols. The University

ensures that appropriate resources, including staff, are in place at the proposed partner institution.

2.94 The University maintains a register of its collaborative arrangements, including the date of the signed agreement, which is reviewed by Academic Board annually. Contractual arrangements with partners are comprehensive, with a full legal contract for all arrangements, allocation of responsibility for each programme, its management and quality assurance procedures which adhere to the requirements set out in the Operational Framework for Collaboration with Partners Handbook. Adequate procedures are in place for the termination of an agreement, which ensure that current students can complete their programme.

2.95 The Working with Others Committee provides effective oversight of the University's academic arrangements with other institutions. The committee meets monthly, and the Chair also has weekly meetings with the Head of Quality Assurance to discuss any issues. Committee minutes evidence clear action tracking. Quarterly reports are received from the Programme Director and the Programme Coordinator or Link Tutor. The latter also complete a comprehensive annual report with sections covering all aspects of delivery, which ensures that any issues are identified.

2.96 Staff who met the review team demonstrated a good understanding of the assurance of standards and quality at partner institutions. Collaborative provision is managed in a consistent manner. For each partnership a Collaborative Coordinator is appointed, who, together with the Partnership Programme Management Board or equivalent, oversees the arrangement and interacts with the external examiner. Collaborative students who met the review team were very satisfied with the quality of the teaching and the support provided, including programme documentation and online access to the University's library resources.

2.97 The University is solely responsible for maintaining records, and awarding certificates and transcripts relating to its programmes delivered through collaborative arrangements. All certificates and transcripts record the required information, including the name and location of the partner organisation engaged in the delivery of the programme. The University also retains appropriate control over publicity and marketing information.

2.98 The review team considers the University has in place an appropriate framework for the management of higher education provision with others and that risk is managed effectively. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.99 The University does not offer research degrees.

**Expectation: Not applicable**

**Level of risk: Not applicable**

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.100 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. From the 11 Expectations in this judgement area, 10 are relevant to the provider. All applicable Expectations are met and are judged to have a low risk.

2.101 The use of consistent and comprehensive data, which enables the University to manage the delivery of programmes effectively across locations, was identified in Expectation B8 as good practice. There are no recommendations in this judgement area. There is one affirmation with regard to the steps being taken by the University to provide written individual feedback to students on all summative assessments. This is located in Expectation B6.

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

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

##### **Findings**

3.1 The University publishes a wide range of information for a variety of audiences in digital and print formats. The University has a Public Information Policy which sets out its approach to providing information. It has been informed by the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) guidelines and the relevant Expectation of the Quality Code. The Academic Board has overall responsibility for ensuring that effective processes and procedures for the generation and publication of information are developed and implemented.

3.2 The published information responsibilities document clearly outlines who is responsible for each piece of published information, who the intended audience is, and how the information is approved. The Brand Team uses a content management system (CMS) to ensure that all published information, whether electronic or hard copy, is accurate and up to date. Changes and updates to information are the responsibility of individual stakeholders. Once recorded on the CMS the marketing department updates the information. The University also regularly reviews relevant aspects of its collaborative partners' websites and learning platforms to ensure the currency and accuracy of information of the University's programmes. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 In reviewing the University's arrangements for producing information the review team scrutinised a wide range of publicly available and internally published information, including the website and VLE; guides and handbooks; policies and procedures; and example award documents. The team also explored staff and student views on the production and availability of information.

3.4 The Public Information Policy is clear, accurate and easily accessible. The comprehensive responsibilities for published information document clearly specifies the author and approval process for all types of published information. It covers a wide range of published information, including information for prospective students, application and induction information, programme information and learning materials, assessment information, information on student guidance and support, information for alumni, academic policies and protocols, regulatory reporting and information on the VLE. Responsibilities for the generation, approval and amendment of the various types of published information are well understood by staff at all levels. Each programme webpage has a designated owner, the Programme Director. They are singularly responsible for signing off all information pertaining to those pages. Collaborative partners follow the same process for change, approval and review of information. This ensures that information is checked for accuracy before being updated.

3.5 To ensure that information remains fit for purpose, each policy contains a date for next review, thus creating a rolling schedule of review for academic policies and protocols by Academic Board. In response to CMA guidance, the University's Legal Team recently reviewed all information provided to prospective and current students during application and enrolment and reported any required changes to the Academic Board.

3.6 Staff utilise a product sheet to ensure that information relating to programmes is communicated consistently. National Programme Directors liaise with the Head of Quality Assurance and the Director of Conversion and Enrolment regarding changes to the product sheet, and the latter maintains a single master version. All information on the sheet is approved by the Director of Conversion and Enrolment and all changes to the product sheet are logged through a smart change system. The Admissions Committee regularly reviews the information held on the product sheet. Programme and learning materials, including student and module guides and handbooks, are updated annually and are easily accessible on the VLE. They contain more detailed outlines of subject content, sessions, bibliography and suggested reading.

3.7 Students who met the review team confirmed that the information they received was accurate, valuable and easily accessible. All information they need can be found on the VLE, which they use extensively. Some information is also provided in hard copy. There was agreement that the information provided to applicants and current students throughout their journey at the University is fit for purpose and of high quality.

3.8 The review team concludes that the University clearly understands the expectations placed upon it with respect to producing accurate information for internal and external stakeholders. The University has robust processes in place to ensure that information is reviewed and updated regularly and that appropriate controls are in place to ensure information, including that produced by collaborative partners, is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**



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

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

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

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

### Findings

4.1 The University's ethos of innovation in student education is underpinned by its academic strategy, and an appropriate policy framework and supporting infrastructure to sustain a focus on enhancement in practice, led at a senior level by the Vice-Provost, Academic Enhancement. The Learning and Teaching Policy sets out a vision in which review and enhancement is embedded in the University's approach, and the Learning and Teaching Strategy commits the University to taking deliberate steps to enhance the quality of student learning opportunities.

4.2 Enhancement is embedded within the institutional governance structure, with identified roles to lead and support this area of work. There are two senior-level committees with a role in enhancement. The Academic Standards and Quality Committee monitors reports and information derived from the regular quality assurance processes, in particular annual monitoring, while the Academic Enhancement Committee undertakes proactive project work to address identified enhancement priorities where discrete attention and focus is needed. The appointment of a Vice-Provost, Academic Enhancement and the creation of Learning and Teaching Coordinator roles in the centres ensure that a culture of enhancement is nurtured and promoted in practice. This framework would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The review team examined policy documents and supporting evidence including minutes of relevant committees, and considered information on staff development opportunities. The team also met with a wide group of staff from different programmes and centres, as well as professional and support staff, and also discussed aspects of enhancement with students.

4.4 The University's ethos of enhancement is confirmed by staff at all levels, who articulated a clear focus on the student experience, alongside an openness to change and innovation within all aspects of teaching and student support. Staff from the University's professional and support services similarly demonstrated enthusiasm for enhancing the provision, both in respect of their particular services, and in relation to their contribution to broader learning opportunities in partnership with academic staff.

4.5 Over recent years, a rolling review of the academic policy framework alongside externally facilitated 'Challenge Seminars' has led to development of a number of new or revised policies which underpin the improvement of the quality of student learning opportunities. These cover, among other things, staff scholarship, staff development, the student experience, peer observation, and staff engagement with legal practice.

4.6 The University's work on enhancement is supported by regular training and academic enhancement seminars delivered within the University's regional centres, as well as an annual Learning and Teaching Conference and a presence within the University's VLE. There are identified Learning and Teaching Coordinators within each centre, whose roles include leading enhancement activity within that centre, and together this network of co-ordinators ensures links and sharing of good practice across the University.

4.7 The policy framework is providing effective support to enable staff to develop themselves and their practice. The University has a broad definition of scholarship which is

tailored to its mission. Annual reviews and plans of such activity follow a common template and are collated and disseminated under the oversight of the Academic Board. Given the University's focus on developing students as resourceful professionals, the Contact with Practice Policy is of particular note. It facilitates staff engagement with legal practice, which directly informs classroom activities.

4.8 Funding is available for staff to attend external conferences or to pursue higher-level qualifications. Allocation of funding is linked to the University's strategic priorities and staff learning is disseminated via a symposium which includes action planning for how the wider University can benefit. Over three quarters of the University's academic staff hold fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Support for applications is embedded within staff probation and promotion policies and overseen by the Vice-Provost, Academic Enhancement.

4.9 The programme of peer and management observations of teaching is valued by staff as a further mechanism for reflection on, and improvement of, their teaching practice. More broadly, there is a structured programme of induction, observation, monitoring and training which effectively supports the development of staff in their learning and teaching roles (see Expectation B3).

4.10 The creation of the Student Association and the Student Parliament has provided a renewed platform for student engagement in enhancement. Students are represented on the Academic Enhancement Committee via the President of the Student Association and the Student Association Executive Officer. The committee gives prominence to reports from the Student Association and the Student Parliament, ensuring that the student voice, as a driver of innovation, is heard. Students consistently report that the University engages with, and responds to, their feedback in positive ways (see Expectation B5).

4.11 The University has a vision to deliver an employment-focused student experience. This means particular emphasis is placed on links with employers. The Employability Service facilitates a range of events and workshops and provides one-to-one support to students. It incorporates the pro bono service, which promotes and connects students with volunteering opportunities. The latter is supported through a clear framework of expectations for student participation. While each student's study location inevitably has an influence on the opportunities available to them, the service has set baseline requirements for local delivery which ensures that all students have access to a minimum level of provision (see Expectation B4).

4.12 The review team met a range of employers who described a dynamic relationship with the University which provides not only an educational service, but a trusted partnership through which legal training and careers can be understood, critiqued and ultimately improved for the benefit of wider society. As a result of its work with employer partners and the regulatory bodies, the University has positioned itself at the forefront of developments in legal careers, influencing and shaping the future of professional regulation and using this position to prepare students for their future in a changing profession.

4.13 Members of University staff gave a number of examples of how their links with employers and legal practice enabled them to enhance learning opportunities for students, for example by setting real-world case studies as classroom tasks or assessments, and through the development of a curriculum that prepares students for a changing employment market. Students value the practice-orientated teaching, and the ability of their tutors to relay professional experience and examples to prepare them for their intended careers. The University's engagement with employers to enhance learning opportunities for students is a feature of **good practice**.

4.14 The Academic Enhancement Committee acts, in practice, as a locus and catalyst for enhancement activity, supporting a range of cross-University projects and working groups to address current enhancement priorities and needs. The University uses a range of delivery sites to pilot innovations with discrete groups of staff and students, enabling clear evidence-based evaluation of their impact. The network of Learning and Teaching Coordinators is effective in encouraging and identifying local good practice that can be disseminated to other centres.

4.15 The University's geographical distribution among a range of delivery sites, including online, presents a challenge to the oversight of enhancement which is being effectively addressed through the work of the Academic Enhancement Committee. The committee effectively draws in expertise from across the academic provision, geographical centres, and support services. A wide range of examples were provided to the team of how enhancement work had had a tangible impact on, and benefit for, students. For example, a personal tutoring project resulted in improved training being rolled out across delivery centres and the University's Teacher of the Year award is incentivising staff to improve their teaching and encouraging discussion about this.

4.16 The University maintains a clear focus on the potential for benefit for student learning opportunities; hence, innovations that have proven popular but for which there was no evidence of impact on student learning have not been taken forward. The strategic approach to enhancement across the University's delivery sites, which promotes innovation and evaluates the impact on student learning opportunities, is a feature of **good practice**.

4.17 Overall, the enhancement theme within the University's strategic plan is being effectively implemented through a dynamic framework which balances local innovation with institutional oversight. Staff uniformly communicate a clear ethos of enhancement and innovation, balanced against the need for any widespread change to be grounded in evidence of impact on student learning. The employment-focused vision of the University is being delivered effectively through the relationships with employers and the profession, which is leveraged to provide opportunities for students. The University's approach places a clear focus on the needs of students and the enhancement of their learning opportunities. Students are engaged in regular dialogue about their programmes, which enables the University to manage enhancement with a clear understanding of student feedback. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the risk is low.

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

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.18 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation is met and the associated risk is low. Two features of good practice have been identified; these concern the University's engagement with employers to enhance learning opportunities for students and the strategic approach to enhancement across the University's delivery sites, which promotes innovation and evaluates the impact on student learning opportunities. The feature of good practice identified in Expectation B8 is also relevant here. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

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

## 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](http://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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx).

### Academic standards

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

### Award

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

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

**Enhancement**

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

**Expectations**

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

**Flexible and distributed learning**

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

**Framework**

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

**Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

**Good practice**

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

**Learning opportunities**

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

**Learning outcomes**

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

**Multiple awards**

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

**Operational definition**

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

**Programme (of study)**

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

**Programme specifications**

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

**Quality Code**

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

**Reference points**

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

**Self-evaluation document**

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

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**Widening participation**

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

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