



Higher Education Review of Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

November 2015

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Tresham College of Further and Higher Education. The review took place from 10 to 12 November 2015 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mandy Hobart
- Mike Ridout
- Kanyanut Ndubuokwu (student reviewer)

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing Tresham College of Further and Higher Education the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

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

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

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

² Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

⁴ Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Tresham College of Further and Higher Education.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice** at Tresham College of Further and Higher Education.

- The development of professional practice skills through the use of live assessment briefs (Expectation B3).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Tresham College of Further and Higher Education.

By June 2016:

- ensure consistency of assessment practice in line with awarding organisation requirements to support student achievement of learning outcomes for Higher National engineering programmes (Expectation B6)
- ensure all recommendations identified in external examiner reports are tracked and resolved to meet awarding organisation requirements (Expectation B7).

By July 2016:

- ensure entry requirements are consistently applied to support progression (Expectation B2)
- develop and implement a systematic approach to identify and allocate resources to support teaching and learning (Expectation B3).

By September 2016:

- develop opportunities for students to take responsibility for monitoring their own progression and achievement (Expectation B3).
- ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to induction and the provision of course information (Expectations B4 and C)
- ensure consistent engagement of the student voice at programme and institutional levels to enhance their educational experience (Expectation B5)
- regularly review and update higher education pages of the intranet to include reports and recommendations from external stakeholders (Expectation C)

- build on programme Quality Improvement Plans and the timely production of Higher Education Self-Assessment Review reports to further implement the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy (Enhancement).

Theme: Digital Literacy

The College has a Digital Evolution Strategy for 2015-18 which is specific to higher education and aimed at enhancing the student learning experience. While it is at a relatively early stage in its implementation, there are many initiatives and schemes in place. In the first instance the approach builds on existing best practice and close working with partner universities to align practices and over the next three years will embrace advances in teaching and learning technologies and employer expectations.

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

About Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

Tresham College of Further and Higher Education is a medium sized provider in Northamptonshire with three main campuses based in Kettering, Wellingborough and Corby. For the academic year 2015-16, there are 217 full and part-time higher education students. In 2013, the College received permission to use the business name 'The University Centre, Tresham College, Northamptonshire' from the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and it is used as a sub-brand for the College's higher education provision.

The College provides two foundation degrees and teacher training courses in collaboration with the University of Bedfordshire, and a full-time and part-time Higher National programme with the University of Northampton. The College also offers Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals with programmes in: business; health, fitness and exercise; sports coaching; engineering; graphics; photography; fashion and textiles; performing arts; and music.

The College mission is 'to deliver an outstanding learning experience, together', which is underpinned by a set of organisational values: putting learners first, collaboration, embracing change, respect and recognition, and aim high. The College is in the process of finalising a higher education strategy which includes an ambition to develop higher education specific buildings and/or areas of study on all Tresham campuses and an overarching goal to achieve 1,000 higher education students by 2020. The College aspires to become a prominent local and regional provider of higher education as well as providing national provision in particular niche markets.

The College received a positive outcome in its 2011 QAA review, with a number of features of good practice, one advisable and five desirable recommendations. The review team considers that the College has effectively responded to the requirements of the recommendations, and features of good practice still mainly feature as extant practice.

Explanation of the findings about Tresham College of Further and Higher Education

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College provides two foundation degrees and teacher training courses in collaboration with the University of Bedfordshire and a full-time and part-time Higher National with the University of Northampton. The content of the programmes is prescribed by the awarding bodies which have the primary responsibility for aligning qualifications with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and structuring programmes around units and credits.

1.2 The College also provides nine Pearson Higher National programmes, both full-time and part-time, where the awarding organisation Pearson is responsible for allocating qualifications to the appropriate level of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

1.3 The College adheres to the documentation that outlines the division of responsibilities between the College and the relevant awarding body and organisation. The agreements, systems and processes that are in place would enable Expectation A1 to be met.

1.4 The review team tested the Expectation by considering the documents that inform programme approval and monitoring. The team also met a range of staff and undertook a telephone conference with the University of Bedfordshire link tutor.

1.5 The University of Northampton and the University of Bedfordshire determine the content of programmes and provide the assessment mechanism for the College. The division of responsibilities is clearly set out in the awarding organisation's documentation. The awarding organisations' validation outcome documentation confirms the approval of programmes and courses the College is able to offer. The College does not design the content of Pearson programmes, although it chooses which units to teach and is responsible for writing assessments. Units are chosen to take account of employability needs and to articulate with its Level 3 provision.

1.5 The College has recently introduced a new internal Programme Approval Process that builds on the previous approach and this has been implemented since September 2015. The process is built on establishing market demand and viability; ensuring awarding body, awarding organisation, and any regulatory requirements are met. The process is clearly mapped to *Chapter B1* of the Quality Code.

1.6 The review team concludes that threshold academic standards are secured overall because the College is delivering programmes and modules approved by its awarding bodies and organisation that align to national frameworks and standards. Therefore Expectation A1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7 The College itself does not award qualifications and works with its awarding bodies and organisation to deliver the programmes it offers. The College has agreements with its awarding bodies and organisation setting out responsibilities, processes and regulation for delivery and assessment, and monitoring the award of academic credit and qualifications. There are clear higher education reporting lines within the College that ensure it complies with the requirements of its awarding bodies and organisation.

1.8 The agreements, processes, regulations and reporting lines in place would enable Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.9 The review team tested the Expectation by considering documentation that sets out responsibilities and reporting lines together with meeting a range of staff.

1.10 Pearson's programmes are governed by partnership agreements. Approval was given by Pearson to run a number of Higher National programmes. The College follows the relevant awarding bodies' or organisation's guidelines, which are outlined within the respective university and Pearson documentation. Internal verification and second marking procedures, where appropriate, are carried out by the College in accordance with guidelines.

1.11 Relationships with the awarding bodies and Pearson are maintained on a regular basis. The University of Bedfordshire Link Tutor informed the review team of the positive relationship with the College. Regular meetings are held with the universities and a quality nominee within the College is responsible for liaising with Pearson and disseminating information to staff.

1.12 The recently appointed Higher Education Lead is responsible for the cross-College management and improvement of higher education and related outcomes. There is a clear committee structure that sets out reporting lines through to the awarding bodies and the award boards for Pearson qualifications. Clear terms of reference have been set for groups, within this structure, that report to the Higher Education Academic Board.

1.13 The review team concludes that the College manages its responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards in line with the requirements of its awarding bodies and organisation. Therefore, Expectation A2.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.14 The College is responsible for delivering programmes in accordance with its awarding bodies' regulations and produces the definitive programme documents through handbooks and programme specifications. Both university partners and Pearson provide clear guidelines and documentation stating the respective roles and responsibilities of the College and awarding body with regard to definitive records. Where responsibilities are deferred to the College, the awarding bodies provide clear guidance and effective support to ensure that the standards expected, in terms of academic frameworks and regulations related to admissions and assessment, are maintained at the expected standards. Such arrangements indicate that the Expectation is met in principle.

1.15 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of programme specifications, unit handbooks, programme validation and review documents, and discussions in meetings with students and staff.

1.16 The College has responsibility for ensuring that definitive records are managed appropriately for student and staff use. The College produces definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected learner achievements for each qualification delivered at the College. Definitive information is made available to students through student handbooks, unit handbooks and programme specifications, which are available for students on the College virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.17 Changes to assessment in terms of format, structure or submission can only occur with the joint approval of the student body representative and the respective course leader. Amendments to university partners' qualifications are undertaken by the awarding partner and are then communicated to the College which may input into their development.

1.18 The review team concludes that definitive programme information is accessible and appropriately managed, ensuring that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.19 The drafting of programme specifications to meet academic threshold standards as set out in academic frameworks, including the FHEQ and the QCF, is the responsibility of the College's partner awarding bodies and organisation. The selection of optional units for Pearson programmes is managed by the Course Team and informed by local employability agendas and feedback from stakeholders including alumni, employers and sector practitioners.

1.20 In addition, the College has developed an internal Programme Approval Process for all new programmes offered at higher education level which is explicitly aligned to the Quality Code. The proposal forms provide clear links to external benchmarks and the FHEQ to ensure all new and existing courses adhere to national standards and are set at the correct level of the FHEQ. The Programme Approval Process also ensures that timely moderation of learning outcomes and assessments is completed prior to the commencement of courses, particularly in respect of Pearson provision.

1.21 The review team finds that the policies and processes in place for programme approval are designed to ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the threshold standard for the qualification. These policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.22 The review team reviewed evidence of College policy and process documents relating to programme approval, read documents relating to recent approval of programmes, and met staff responsible for programme design and approval.

1.23 The review team found that the College consistently applies the procedures of its awarding bodies and awarding organisation to secure the academic standards for their awards offered at the College. Recent examples of the College's internal Programme Approval Process demonstrate that the processes described above operate effectively and as intended. Following the decision by the Course Leadership Group to approve the course request, an outcome of internal course approval request form is completed which records the status of the external approval

1.24 In summary, the College's university partners and Pearson provide frameworks, policies and procedures for assessment and the award of credit and qualifications that are designed to ensure that UK and awarding partner standards are met, and which the College is required to follow. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): 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

1.25 Where partner universities act as the awarding body, the programmes use the university programme specifications provided, alongside unit information forms/unit handbooks to ensure that programmes are assessed according to the intended learning outcomes confirmed at validation.

1.26 Modules are mapped to learning outcomes through the internal moderation of assessment briefs. The College Assessment Regulations and the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy have been developed to ensure that all higher education programmes align with UK threshold standards and to provide clear guidance on how learning outcomes are assessed in a fair and equitable manner. Where university partners have set the assessment, College staff undertake the marking and internal verification and tutors from the partner university sample and quality assure assessment decisions. Link tutors from the universities work closely with course leaders in the College to ensure the correct documentation and procedures are used, grading guidance and systems are appropriate, and that timelines are met. Results are monitored through second marking and at university exam boards.

1.27 The team finds that the policies and procedures in place to implement the frameworks provided by its university partners and awarding organisation in relation to the achievement of learning outcomes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.28 The team tested the Expectation through consideration of external examiner reports, minutes of exam board meetings, activity procedures and review of Self-Assessment Reports, and held meetings with staff responsible for course management and maintaining an overview of standards.

1.29 The College works closely with its partner universities who ensure that assessment strategies and practices are robust and that grading meets UK threshold standards. Pearson external examiner reports also indicate that academic standards are being met in most programmes, and monitor closely those areas requiring improvement. Meetings with staff provided clear evidence that both course teams and senior managers understand the requirements for monitoring of academic standards in the achievement of learning outcomes.

1.30 All assessments are checked to ensure that they are both relevant to supporting students to meet programme outcomes and at the required level. Clear documentation and central monitoring of achievement through course team and higher education meetings, along with the quality assurance and monitoring reports, further assures that student achievement is appropriately monitored and verified.

1.31 The College's university partners and Pearson provide frameworks, policies and procedures for assessment and the award of credit and qualifications that are designed to ensure that UK and awarding partner standards are met and which the College is required to follow. The College operates clear processes and procedures for satisfying the requirements of their partners which effectively support students to achieve programme learning outcomes. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.32 The College is subject to the processes of monitoring and periodic review determined by their university partners as part of the cyclical review and renewal of the partnership agreement. The College has recently completed a University of Bedfordshire Institutional Review, a process led by a panel of University representatives which involves the submission of a self-evaluation document and a review visit. Information from course teams feeds into partners' annual monitoring reports on individual programmes and also into an overarching annual report produced by partner course leaders.

1.33 In addition to university-led programme monitoring and review, the College has developed its own internal systems. Managers are required complete to higher education annual monitoring reports for all Higher National programmes, as well as foundation degree provision. The College also produces a Higher Education Annual Monitoring Report to review academic standards and quality across the College. The Higher Education Academic Board receives reports from all programmes and ensures that higher education provision satisfies the requirements of external awarding bodies and organisations. The cross-College annual monitoring report for higher education provision is produced by the Higher Education Lead and is reviewed by the Academic Board and senior management.

1.34 The review team finds that the policies and procedures in place for the monitoring and review of programmes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.35 The review team tested the Expectation by examining a range of evidence including partnership agreements, quality assurance documents, self-evaluation reviews, external examiner reports, and remits and minutes of the Higher Education Assessment Board and exam boards. The team also met senior academic managers, lecturers and quality assurance staff along with the Head of Higher Education and a link tutor.

1.36 Standards monitoring for university degrees is undertaken or overseen by the partner universities, and support and guidance provided to the College as required. For Pearson programmes this is managed through exam boards and external verification by awarding body appointed external examiners. Scrutiny of external examiner reports and annual monitoring reports ensures that assessment is carried out at the appropriate level of the FHEQ.

1.37 Overall, the review team is satisfied that effective mechanisms are in place for the management of monitoring and review of the academic standards as part of programme delivery and that the College fulfils its delegated responsibilities with regard to the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.38 External examiners are appointed and managed by the awarding bodies and organisation. External examiner reports are used by the College, as part of its quality procedures. Where necessary, a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is produced and monitored by the Quality Team and relevant Head of School to ensure timely and effective responses are made.

1.39 The awarding bodies and Pearson are responsible for ensuring appropriate external scrutiny during validation and review. The College's internal approval process for new programmes requires evidence of the consideration of the external contact and employer engagement.

1.40 The processes and procedures used by the awarding bodies and organisation and the systems within the College for the use of external and independent expertise would enable Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.41 In testing this Expectation, the review team considered external examiner reports, documentation concerning programme approval. The team also held meetings with staff and students.

1.42 External examiner reports identify the achievement or otherwise of academic standards. The College contributes, as appropriate, to Pearson's responses to external examiner reports and produces QIPs in response to its reports.

1.43 The College maintains an understanding of the wider needs of employers and industry through links with the Northamptonshire Economic Partnership and the South East Midlands Local Economic Partnership and other employer groups. Employers and related organisations are involved in the validation process for the awarding bodies' courses and Pearson has processes for employer engagement. The College has strong links with employers and industry at course delivery level by providing external input into the learning programmes offered.

1.44 The awarding bodies' and Pearson's processes and procedures together with the College's systems, enables external and independent expertise to be used in ensuring that academic standards are set and maintained. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.45 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.46 All Expectations in this area are met with low risk. The College works effectively with its partner universities and Pearson in the maintenance of academic standards. The relevant university and Pearson quality assurance frameworks are used and adhered to. The College has mechanisms to ensure standards are maintained and appropriate use is made of external expertise where appropriate.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The awarding bodies are primarily responsible for the design, development and approval of the higher education programmes delivered at the College, and retain ultimate responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance. The College does not have direct responsibility for programme design, other than through participation in collaborative forums with its partner awarding bodies that provides input into course developments. All of the validated programmes that the College delivers undergo formal approval processes that are owned by the universities.

2.2 The College is able to design, or construct, the Pearson Higher National awards it delivers from the selection of off-the-shelf modules.

2.3 The College has recently developed its own Programme Approval Process (PAP) which provides a formal opportunity for reviewing the validity of programmes to the local area and higher education skills needs. All new courses from 2015 onwards will be subject to detailed programme approval. The PAP outlines the roles and responsibilities of all relevant members of staff and requires heads of school and course leaders, supported by their delivery teams, to provide meaningful market intelligence and evidence of course content linked to skills development. Student feedback on proposed developments is also sought. This helps the College make an informed judgement of the fitness for purpose of programme proposals.

2.4 The review team considers that the process of programme design, development and approval would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

2.5 In reaching its final conclusions on the operation of the process, the review team met staff to discuss and confirm the College's responsibilities and approaches to programme design, development and approval and the scope for programme teams to become involved in the programme content and delivery strategies. Supporting evidence in the form of course team minutes, the Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB) remit and minutes, and awarding body checklists were also scrutinised to confirm the scope and consistency of review and approval procedures.

2.6 For Pearson programmes, student feedback and satisfaction information helps inform minor adjustments to programmes including feedback provided at the Student Experience and Enhancement Forum. This process forms part of the College's continual improvement process along with the Feedback for Enhancement Loop which takes account of external drivers such as industry requirements and partnership collaboration opportunities.

2.7 Programme reviews and approval for Pearson provision provide the opportunity to make minor adjustments to assessment strategies and activities. There is evidence that HEAB, Course Team meetings and use of student feedback in the evaluation of courses as documented in HE Self-Assessment Reviews (HESARs) also inform developments to improve learning opportunities for future cohorts

2.8 The review team finds that the College has effective mechanisms for programme approval which are clearly documented, and these complement those of partner universities and Pearson. Review of programme delivery through the use of annual monitoring reports and annual reports provided to collaborative partners evidence good practices and areas for development. Student feedback through the Student Experience and Enhancement Forum (SEEF) and student surveys also serve to inform programme development and improvement within the set parameters.

2.9 Overall, there are clear mechanisms for the design, development and approval of programmes that enable the College to deliver and maintain academic standards, and assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. There are also effective processes in place that help to inform minor adjustments to programmes. The review team concludes the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.10 Admission to the College's higher education provision is through UCAS and direct application to the College. The College process for admissions follows UCAS, awarding bodies, and Pearson procedures. The College introduced some changes to its application process following a systematic review in August and September 2014 whereby the responsibility for all higher education applications has been transferred from the Customer Service Team to the Higher Education Office. The Higher Education Service Executive follows a policy for advice and guidance to students and prospective students. General admission principles are set out on the College's website. The review team finds the College's approach to recruitment, selection and admission would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.11 To test the operational effectiveness of the College's admission processes, the review team considered supporting documents including policies and procedures, training provided for Higher Education Office, and admissions, retention and achievement data. Further information was gathered through discussions with staff and students.

2.12 The admissions process is currently administered by the Higher Education Service Executive, which records applications onto the central management information system software to ensure that suitable candidates are offered the correct codes and tracking the applications.

2.13 All prospective students have a number of options available to them in order to make a formal application for higher education courses. The process for applying depends on the awarding body of the chosen course. For University of Northampton programmes, all applications for the full-time course are made via UCAS and all decisions on admitting students onto the HND Computing are completed by the Admissions Office at the University. All part-time HNC Computing students can apply online, via the University's system, however, all decision on entry for the part-time course are made by the College. Students who wish to apply for University of Bedfordshire programmes complete a paper-based application, as per the partnership agreement.

2.14 Applicants who wish to apply for full or part-time Pearson Higher National programmes can apply for full-time study via UCAS or, alternatively, for either full or part-time study they can apply via the College's online system on the website and/or complete a paper-based form.

2.15 Entry requirements are noted on the website and set by the partner university. Applicants on Creative Arts courses are required to attend an interview by the Course Leader. All course leaders who conduct the interview complete a standardised form which is copied to the candidate. Furthermore, candidates for the Certificate in Education/PGCE and FdA Early Years attend an interview conducted by the course leaders and coordinated by the Higher Education Services Executive. There is also an initial assessment which is required to be completed as part of the interview process.

2.16 If the candidate wishes to gain direct entry onto a HND on the basis they have completed the HNC elsewhere, the Higher Education Service Executive works with the Course Leader to map previous modules against the College's HNC in order to make a decision on whether the student has the right skill set to progress.

2.17 Disabilities can be declared on the application form, and once a student has accepted a place, the student is contacted in regards to Student Disability Allowance and support on completing the paperwork is provided by the Higher Education Service Executive. For those who do not declare a disability at the application stage, information is provided during induction and in the Higher Education Learner Handbook. Furthermore tutors may recognise the need for adjustments and feed back to Higher Education Service Executive. The Higher Education Service Executive works closely with students with a learning need and/or disability from the enrolment stage and liaises with course leaders as well as the Additional Learning Support Team in order to put appropriate support in place.

2.18 For those candidates who are unsuccessful, they are given feedback and signposting to alternative course. College staff keep up to date with the changes and trends by attending the regional UCAS convention at University of Bedfordshire and the Midlands College Regional Meetings organised by UCAS.

2.19 The review team met students who confirmed that they have looked at prospectus and course details on the website; some watched online videos, some attended the Open Day and some students progressed from Level 3. The students also have the option to attend sample classes prior to making any decision.

2.20 The students the review team met found the admission process fit for purpose and straightforward. The timeline from applying to the College to being given a place is varied; some were given an offer instantly and some may have to undergo certain tests depending on the qualification.

2.21 The review team finds that the approach the College currently use in managing its higher education retention and progression data is not robust. The annual HESAR from each programme has shown that the College has spotted some area for improvements where the numbers of students has dramatically dropped. The team **recommends** that by July 2016 the College ensures entry requirements are consistently applied to support progression.

2.22 The review team concludes that the College has consistent procedures for liaising with its awarding bodies and awarding organisations in relation to admissions, and has effective admissions processes which are understood by students and staff so that the Expectation is met. The absence of continuously support in order to achieve accurate retention and achievement data represents a moderate risk to the College's admissions procedures.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.23 Higher education teaching and learning is underpinned by the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy and the Staff Development and Scholarly Activity Policy. These documents set out the College's approach to improving teaching practice within higher education. Advanced practitioners are appointed in each School to support and facilitate staff development. Central to staff development and improving the quality of teaching and learning is the use of the weekly CPD hour.

2.24 Staff are recruited using the College's recruitment and selection procedures that ensure the level of qualification and experience is appropriate for higher education teaching. Support is provided for newly appointed teachers and those making transition into higher education teaching. Staff action plans to improve teaching and learning are agreed as part of the Performance Management Procedure. There are processes for the observation of teaching together with opportunities for student feedback on their learning experience.

2.25 Library Learning Resource Centre subject champions work closely with tutors to ensure resources and reading lists are up to date. The rollout of the Digital Evolution Strategy underpins the use of information technology and digital resources within teaching and learning. Physical resources are available to support the higher vocational needs of the courses.

2.26 The review team considered the College's approaches to the provision of students' learning opportunities would enable Expectation B3 to be met.

2.27 In testing this Expectation the review team considered the notes of meetings, the handbooks and documentation developed by the College. The team also held meetings with a range of staff members and students.

2.28 Staff action plans are central to improving the quality of teaching and learning. These plans are drawn up and monitored by the Head of School and Advanced Practitioners drawing on the strengths and areas for improvements identified as part of the lesson observation process and learning walks. Although these plans are used for all levels of teaching across the College, reference is made, where appropriate, to higher education. A higher education specific lesson observation feedback form has been introduced from September 2015. Higher education practice identified in action plans includes the use of questioning techniques using technical and analytical language; filming students to analyse their own performance; working with an actor prior to their performance in the local theatre; and modifying material from one area of study to another to help students improve their analytical skills. These activities were also identified as topics for inclusion in the CPD hour. The weekly mandatorily CPD hour is used by the College to share practice or focus on a particular topic as part of its approach to supporting and improving teaching and learning.

2.29 As part of the recruitment process applicants are required to undertake a micro-teaching session. All teaching staff are contractually required to hold or obtain a teaching qualification. Opportunities are provided for staff development and these have

included attending conferences, postgraduate study, webinars, and visiting other institutions. There are three College staff development days scheduled during the academic year and opportunity will be taken in these to focus on higher education teaching and learning. The Information and Learning Technology Coordinator acts as the bridge between lecturers and IT services by providing support in the use of information technology to improve teaching and learning. A higher education away day, organised by the Higher Education Lead, was held in July 2015 and focused on the College's vision for higher education, scholarship and assessment.

2.30 Student feedback, obtained from survey results, focus groups and external examiner reports, is positive about the quality of teaching and the opportunities for external input within courses. This was confirmed to the review team in the student submission and the meeting with students. Students were particularly appreciative of the opportunities for live assignments that involve students working on particular commissions and the opportunity to develop professional practice skills. Examples provided to the review team include photography and graphic students developing publicity material for a local charity. Students also worked with a local civic society to produce an up-to-date logo, stationery and leaflets. The review team considers that the development of professional practice skills through the use of live assessment briefs is **good practice**.

2.31 Investment has been made and resources available to support the delivery of higher education programmes, in particular music and photography. This was driven by strong student representation and the College acting upon this feedback. Although a meeting entitled Future Resourcing was convened to address this resourcing issue, there is no formal process for identifying higher education resourcing needs. The new programme development process includes identification of resources to support delivery. The review team **recommends** that by July 2016 the College develops and implements a systematic approach to identify and allocate resources to support teaching and learning.

2.32 Students are able to seek feedback from staff on their academic performance although there is variation in the availability of this support. For 2015-16, the College is making available to students the online system that records student performance. Students, in the meeting with the review team, were not fully aware of this and spoke of their reliance on their tutors to provide feedback on performance. The review team **recommends** that by September 2016 the College develops opportunities for students to take responsibility for monitoring their own progression and achievement.

2.33 The College has appointed a Director of Teaching, Learning and Performance who will be responsible for driving forward the College's Teaching and Learning Strategy at all levels, including higher education. This will include opportunities for scholarly activity, peer observation, postgraduate study and developing the Tresham Research Group.

2.34 Overall, the College has in place processes and procedures to support teaching and learning. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B3 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.35 The College's Higher Education Charter sets out their commitment to student support. The Higher Education Services Executive oversees higher education student support and acts as focal point for students in signposting to help and support available. There is a strong focus on progression of the College's level 3 students onto higher education courses. This is facilitated by the '#HEAspirations Week and the level 3 tutorial programme.

2.36 Personal development coaches provide 'drop-in' tutorials and support with study and employability skills for all students starting on higher education courses. Details of the student support, resources and policies available are set out on the website and in the higher education and course handbooks. The Learning Resource Centre provides resources to support students in their study. Support is available for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

2.37 The approaches and availability of student support at the College would enable Expectation B4 to be met.

2.38 In testing this Expectation the review team considered the notes of meetings, the handbooks and documentation developed by the College. The review team also held meetings with a range of staff members and students.

2.39 The College provides a full range of support to students covering the transition onto their programme, their study at the College and progression from their course. The College has also introduced a scheme whereby students are able to obtain a mobile device through a monthly payment scheme. The Higher Education Student Handbook provides a useful reference point on the help and support available. This handbook gives information on the facilities available at the College, the range of student support on offer and the key policies and guidance related to students' study, and students also have access to this information online. Students spoke positively to the review team about the support available and particularly the role of the Higher Education Services Executive. Students saw this role as pivotal in providing a reference point when they had an issue or needed clarification over a matter impacting on their study at the College.

2.40 There is a strong focus on preparing level 3 students on College courses to make the transition to higher education through the '#HEAspirations Week that commenced in April 2015, together with tutorial programmes that focus on progression to higher education and developing academic skills in preparation for their future study.

2.41 Students undergo an induction process and are provided with introductory information relating to their course; this is mainly in the form of course handbooks. Previously there has been no central coordination of induction. For 2015-16, the Higher Education Lead made a presentation to all students studying higher education at the College and this was recorded and made available to each course on the VLE for future reference. There is, however, variability in induction and introductory course information. This has been noted by external examiners and focus group meetings. This was also confirmed to the review team in the meeting with students. The Higher Education Lead has started a process, through the Higher Education Student Experience and Enhancement Forum, to engage

students in determining the scope of induction for 2016-17. The review team **recommends** that by September 2016 the College ensures a consistent and comprehensive approach to induction and the provision of course information.

2.42 Academic skills are developed within the teaching programme and supported by the Learning Resource Centre. The Learning Resource Centre makes available, online, a range of support, guides and tools to enable the development of academic skills and understanding of plagiarism. Higher education students have an additional borrowing limit for library texts and are able to access journals, onsite and offsite, electronically. The Library Resource Centre subject champions liaise with tutors to ensure the reading lists are current for higher education courses. Students have access to the College's VLE known as the Learning Hub. This provides students with course and lecture materials together with access to playlists of video clips. The College also undertakes audits of its VLE to ensure that material and information to support student learning meets the expectations set out in its Digital Literacy Strategy. Students who are registered with the University of Northampton and the University of Bedfordshire have access to the resources on their respective VLEs. Students who met the review team were positive about the help provided by the Learning Resource Centre to support their academic skills and the usefulness of the VLE.

2.43 Progression agreements are in place with the University of Northampton and the University of Bedfordshire to provide top-up routes for students studying at the College. The Higher Education Services Executive provides support for students on Pearson programmes looking to progress to final year of a degree programme. The development of employability skills is integral within teaching and assessment, including as mentioned B3 the use of live assignments together with past students sharing their experiences with current cohorts.

2.44 The College has in place processes and procedures to support students. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.45 The College has a Student Experience & Enhancement Forum (SEEF) comprising student representatives from each School and College managers. It acts as a conduit between the student body and the College Management Group and ensures the student voice is heard and used to inform higher education delivery and operational development. The College engages all higher education students in their learning experience through unit surveys, focus groups and inviting student to approval panels and SAR moderation panels. Such arrangements ensure that the College meets the Expectation in principle.

2.46 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach to student engagement through discussions with staff and students, and consideration of support documentation including the student submission, SEEF minutes, focus groups and the Feedback for Enhancement Loop.

2.47 One of the methods used by the College to engage students is the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey. Unit surveys for 2014-15 show that 80 per cent of students were satisfied with the teaching and learning, assessment and equality. Heads of school monitor the survey results and identify areas where improvements are needed and the team heard about a number of actions which were being taken to assure and enhance the student educational experience.

2.48 SEEF is introduced to students during induction by the HE Lead as well as explaining the student representation system and process. All higher education courses elect student representatives in the first term of the academic year and represent their programmes on a termly basis. The review team heard from students that some reps were volunteered and some reps did not receive training.

2.49 SEEF is used to provide students with the opportunity to submit updates on course progress, suggestions for improvement to quality, resources and curriculum, and to receive first-hand updates from College management regarding changes and improvements being made. In cases where student reps fail to attend the meeting, the updates and minutes will be sent to them via email. SEEF is chaired by Higher Education Lead, thereby providing a channel of communication between the student body and the College Management Group (CMG). The Higher Education Team (HE Lead and HE Services Executive) provides SEEF with updates of the actions which are taking place, in order for the student rep to circulate the information to their fellow students.

2.50 The College also engages students in the quality enhancement process through programme-level focus groups. These are held by either the HE Lead, HE Service Executive, Head of School or Director of Strategic Curriculum Operations. The outcomes are fed back into the Feedback for Enhancement Loop (see Enhancement Expectation) by providing insight into student satisfaction.

2.51 College engagement of students in quality assurance processes also includes their input in periodic review and the Programme Approval Process. Where student representation can be accessed, whether this be from the prospective internal students, students from an existing programme related to the new course being developed, or from a student representative of a current course under review, SEEF input is sought on elements

such as unit selection, desired progression routes, and suggested teaching, learning and assessment strategies.

2.52 The College has involved student representatives in its Higher Education Self-Assessment process for a number of years. In this process, student reps are given the opportunity to write a summary of standards experienced throughout the year, as well as recording recommendations for the future development of the course. Student representatives are also invited to sit on the moderation panel of the HESAR.

2.53 The students the team met agreed that they felt that their voice and opinions are heard, and there are some actions and/or feedback from the College about their concerns. However, they felt that on a number of occasions the College has been reactive rather than proactive in meeting their needs in terms of learning resources. This contributed to the team's recommendation under Expectation B3 regarding the resource allocation to support teaching and learning.

2.54 The review team finds that progress in implementing student members in committees has been slow and evidence of how the action is being implemented is unclear. Students met by the team confirmed that they were not represented in programme team meetings and not represented on the Higher Education Academic Board. The team heard from managers that the College intends to extend membership of the Academic Board to include student representation. The team **recommends** that by September 2016 the College ensures consistent engagement of the student voice at programme and institutional levels to enhance their educational experience.

2.55 The review team concludes that students understand how the representation system and other mechanisms of student engagement operate at the College and the College monitors and responds to the student voice. The review team makes one recommendation under this Expectation which is to strengthen engagement of the student voice at both programme and institutional levels. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate reflecting weaknesses in some of the deliberate steps taken by the College to engage with all students.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.56 For university courses delivered by the College through its partnership agreements, the assessment information is provided to unit tutors along with clear guidance around deadlines, content and marking schemes. Support is provided to staff members through link tutors to ensure accuracy and a standardised approach to assessment is maintained. All initial marking is undertaken by unit lecturers in the College and second marked and checked by university staff to ensure consistency and appropriateness of grading judgements. All results are considered by exam boards hosted by the validating university to confirm grades and student progression. New lecturers are approved by the university and receive guidance from link tutors and experienced peers to ensure they are familiar with course marking requirements.

2.57 For Pearson programmes, College staff are responsible for devising assessments which are internally verified and also commented upon by external examiners. All assessed work is marked by College lecturers and internally verified or second marked by senior course tutors and ratified at assessment boards held in the College. The Higher Education Assessment Strategy sets out clear guidance on assessment regulations which course teams comply with. The review team finds that these arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The review team was able to review a range of documentary evidence linked to the application and assessment process including handbooks, minutes of meetings, exam boards and external examiner reports and associated Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs). The procedures demonstrated how assessments are managed, checked and outcomes agreed including through exam boards and assessment panels. Meetings with staff and students served to further clarify understanding of the procedures and how this is monitored. It is clear that the College operates equitable, valid and reliable process of assessment which meet awarding body and organisation requirements.

2.59 All HN assessments include a moderated vocational scenario, and in the HNC/D Graphic Design assessments utilise project work set by industry professionals and employers. This represents good practice as outlined in Expectation B3. The Higher Education Lead moderates the content of assignment briefs from a sample of programmes to ensure that appropriate levels are set, though the College does not use standardised templates across all Higher National provision.

2.60 Assessments are required to include clear contextualisation of grading criteria at Merit and Distinction level to make clear to students the nature of evidenced required, an area which has been the focus for staff development sessions. All summative written assessments are submitted through the VLE and the originality of work checked via plagiarism-detection software. Tutors aim to provide feedback to students within 15 working days to ensure that feedback is timely and constructive. Students confirmed that feedback was timely and constructive including the provision of formative feedback as appropriate.

2.61 External examiner reports for the Higher National engineering provision indicate that not all assessments are appropriate and a detailed list of recommendations has been set out. Higher levels of staff turnover means that not all recommendations have been fully implemented. A QIP has been developed and is monitored by the new Course Manager and Head of School. The review team recommends that by June 2016 the College ensures consistency of assessment practice in line with awarding organisation requirements to support student achievement of learning outcomes for Higher National engineering programmes.

2.62 Students are provided with assessment schedules which have been planned to avoid putting undue pressure on them at any one time. Students are made aware of the Appeals Procedure should they feel that their grade does not accurately reflect the work completed. Students may seek help and additional clarification from tutors as required. Students also have a timetabled session in the initial weeks of their course to provide them with information on the Assessment Process and Regulations and to prepare them for the standards of assessment, assessment structures, procedures, terminology and rules. Clear guidance on grading and overall grade calculations is provided to enable students to set targets and monitor their own progress, though use of a new online system for accessing results is still under development.

2.63 The College has a well organised system for ensuring the transparency and validity of assessment. Periodic assessment boards and end of year exam boards check and agree the results for students on Higher National programmes. Each board uses an impartial Chair (outside of the delivery team) to incorporate externality, and to consider extenuating circumstances, the allocation of resubmissions and the progression of students. Students are informed of the processes as part of induction and reminded of requirements as part of the assessment setting process. Students are notified in writing of the results of assessment boards and are provided, where necessary, with realistic deadlines for which resubmission can be submitted. Student progress and achievement is monitored by courses tutors who discuss individual student progress at regular team meetings through online systems. A Steering Group has been introduced to look at issues around student progression and achievement as evidenced by online systems, and to make recommendations for continued improvements.

2.64 The College has a clear Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and also follows the guidance of partner awarding bodies where entry with advanced standing is sought for their courses. Entry criteria are clearly set out in the Higher Education Prospectus and through course descriptors. Students may also be given initial assessments, interviews and auditions, as appropriate, to determine their readiness for study on a particular higher education programme. The Higher Education Executive Services team is responsible for providing guidance and for keeping students informed about the progress of their application.

2.65 The College effectively applies the regulations for assessment that are linked to university-validated provision. This is checked by link tutors and there are clear mechanisms for second marking and internal verification. For Pearson provision, the College relies on its own internal verification systems and feedback from external examiners and students, and deliberations of Course Team meetings and the Higher Education Academic Board. QIPs and Programme Monitoring Reports ensure that course developments and external recommendation are clear and progress is monitored.

2.66 Overall, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk to be moderate. The moderate level of risk relates to the one recommendation made under this Expectation in relation to the College putting into place plans to address weaknesses in assessment practice for Higher National engineering programmes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.67 Activity flowcharts provide clear guidance as to the expected sequence of events and suggested approach to both communicating and preparing for Pearson external examiner visits. The process is overseen by the Quality Coordinator who ensures that managers, staff and students are aware of the arrangements for the external examiner visit.

2.68 External examiner reports are sent to the Quality Coordinator who makes them available online. Where actions or recommendations are made in the reports, the Course Leader is required to complete a QIP. The Quality Coordinator monitors the achievement of the QIP and reports progress to College management. The Higher Education Lead provides support to the course leaders in achieving actions identified within the QIP.

2.69 The University of Bedfordshire responds to actions highlighted by external examiners and notify, if required, College representatives who undertake appropriate action and report back to the University.

2.70 Students are made aware of the role of external examiners at induction and are provided, where possible, with the opportunity to meet the external examiner on their visit to the College. External examiner reports and QIPs are shared with students through the Higher Education Student Experience and Enhancement Forum, course focus groups and made available on the relevant course home page on the VLE.

2.71 The processes and procedures in place to manage and use feedback from external examiners would enable the College to meet Expectation B7.

2.72 In testing this Expectation the review team considered the processes for managing external examiners and their reports and the actions plans produced in response to these. The team also held meetings with a range of staff members and students.

2.73 Pearson external examiners acknowledge the College's supportive approach in making arrangements for their visits. In the reports seen by the team, external examiners comment positively on the College's management of assessment and response to the feedback. The HNC in Engineering is, however, the one exception where the external examiner raised serious concerns about this course in June 2014 and placed a block on certification. In June 2015, the external examiner noted that some issues had been addressed yet expressed further concerns regarding the management of assessment and the course remained blocked. In order that students were not disadvantaged the external examiner has allowed limited certification of student results. The review team examined the QIPs resulting from these external examiner reports and found that although actions had been identified there was a lack of detail on the sufficiency and effectiveness of the actions taken to address the recommendations and whether these had been monitored internally. The Self-Assessment Report for the HNC in Engineering comments on the limited time for internal verification and staff to undertake this. The comments relating to the external examiner report acknowledges the course being 'on block' yet there was no recognition of the impact of the situation on the integrity of assessment and the need for urgent action to rectify the position. The review team therefore **recommends** that by June 2016 the College ensures that all recommendations identified in external examiner reports are tracked and resolved to meet awarding organisation requirements.

2.74 External examiner reports for University of Bedfordshire programmes confirm that academic standards are met and one examiner commented positively on the level of criticality of the College's students.

2.75 Students who met the review team were aware of the external examiner role and where to access reports.

2.76 Overall, the review team concludes that the College does not implement fully its processes for ensuring the scrupulous use of external examiners. Therefore, based on the evidence received, Expectation B7 is not met and the risk is moderate. The reason for this is that the processes responding to monitoring Pearson external examiner reports have not been managed and monitored in all cases and the risk is moderate as the problems identified are confined to a small part of the provision.

Expectation: Not met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.77 The College successfully completed a University of Bedfordshire Institutional Review in May 2015 as part of the cyclical review process of the University. The review confirmed the College management of provision provides a valid and reliable measure of maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning and teaching, and that the College fulfils its delegated responsibilities. The review also confirmed that the College provides valuable support in identifying areas for future enhancement and the further development of practise. Course journals are used by staff members to ensure the monitoring of University of Bedfordshire provision which supports ongoing evaluation of provision and support from the University as required.

2.78 In addition to university-led programme monitoring and review, the College has developed its own internal systems of review and for monitoring the success of programmes, including the development of the HESAR. This report aims to provide an overview of higher education provision against a range of key performance indicators including employer engagement and evidence of programme enhancement, and support for the development of good practice. The overarching Higher Education Annual Monitoring Report sets out not only areas for development based on programme monitoring reports, but also priorities for improvements.

2.79 The higher education programme monitoring reports link to feedback from external examiners as well as from students and other stakeholders such as employers where work related learning projects are undertaken. For university-validated provision, the College produces review reports in compliance with the awarding body requirements. Programme monitoring reports for higher national provision are produced using the College template and individual courses produce Self-Assessment Reports which are linked to QIPs. Progress against recommendations and identified areas for improvement include consideration of student feedback and comments and recommendations made by external examiners. An overarching HESAR is produced by the Higher Education Lead annually and is submitted to Academic Board. Outcomes are reviewed by senior management to inform both resource and programme planning. The HESAR comments on progress against key indicators such as recruitment, retention and achievement, as well as programme and College-level enhancements and the development of scholarly activity. Programme level areas for review and development are discussed at Heads of School meetings and Course Team meetings.

2.80 The review team considers that these arrangements for programme monitoring and review would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.81 The review team met staff, students and a link tutor to discuss the monitoring and review procedures and tracking of actions. A range of reports and minutes of meetings were presented as supporting evidence along with completed Self-Assessment Reports and QIPs.

2.82 Meetings within schools and course teams support the ongoing monitoring and review of programme delivery and quality assurance. Course Teams meet to discuss progress against external recommendations and student feedback as well as programme resource needs and developments. However, in the case of the HNC/D Engineering provision, it is not clear how key actions linked to the external examiner report have been

actioned to assure the quality and student learning experience, as outlined in Expectation B6.

2.83 Heads of school meet at least termly to review and discuss higher education provision needs at a College as well as programme level and to share good practices and priorities as part of the Heads of School Higher Education meetings. Actions linked to QIPs are reviewed as part of the course team meetings, and the Higher Education Lead also meets with teams to track progress. Student progress and course management and enhancement based on consideration of external examiner reports are discussed and QIP action points monitored. Course teams also consider student feedback captured both formally through surveys and informally through feedback to lecturers and tutors.

2.84 The review team finds that the College has an appropriate range of methods for supporting the regular and systematic monitoring and review of the provision it offers. University requirements for monitoring and review for assuring standards and quality are complied with and the College's own programme monitoring and cross-provision meetings support holistic approaches to enhancement of the student learning experience. The introduction of the HESAR ensures that oversight of higher education provision is maintained and developments based on feedback are supported and tracked. The College procedures work well, and the HESAR along with course level annual monitoring reports and QIPs provide clear evidence that the quality of provision is monitored and reviewed. Actions linked to recommendations and improvements are tracked and shared through cross-College meetings and events such as the higher education meetings and staff development events.

2.85 The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low as clear and effective procedures are in place and operated for both university provision and Pearson programmes.

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

2.86 The College has an established a procedure called Talkback which is the primary avenue for raising appeals and complaints at the College. This system provides a clear, transparent and impartial route for students to raise concerns regarding their experiences at the College, and if necessary to initiate investigations into alleged academic and pastoral malpractice. It is available on the College's website, on the VLE, within student handbooks, and on course notice boards, and is covered in the induction of all new students. The College procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals are fair, effective and timely and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.87 The review team discussed the College's arrangements with senior staff, support staff, academic staff and students. The team examined the procedures available to students on the VLE, in student handbooks and through links to awarding body regulations, as well as on the College website.

2.88 All students have access to the Talkback Policy on the College's website and VLE, and they may discuss their issue with their tutors, Higher Education Service Executive or Lead. Information about the complaints are also available in the student handbook. Some of this information includes links to awarding body regulations. Students are made aware of the difference between academic appeals and complaints during induction. Information is also provided in student handbooks which directs them to the respective institution's policies, although the team found that the information is inconsistent and varied between handbooks.

2.89 All matters are directed to the Quality Team who will assign an impartial management representative to investigate the claim where necessary. Students are kept informed of the progress of the investigation and are clearly notified of the outcomes. All appeals and complaints are logged by the Quality Coordinator on an online system to allow for periodic analysis to occur, and for detailed records of actions to be collated. In 2014-15, seven complaints were made, three of which were upheld with no academic appeals being raised.

2.90 In the case of complaints about programmes delivered by the College for its university awarding partners, these are investigated first through the College's Talkback Policy. Any complaints sent to partner universities will be forwarded to the College for their investigation in the first instance. The outcome of such investigations will be shared with the specific partner. The student has a right to appeal any decision made by the College with the partner university. Although the Talkback procedure may be used to raise the issue, when applicable partner procedures are applied to ensure a standardised response for the awarding body. In an example seen by the review team, timely and ongoing communications were made between the Quality Coordinator and Director of Strategic Curriculum Operations at the College and representatives of the universities' Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee. An effective QIP was established, implemented and reported back to both the University Committee and the student.

2.91 While the scale of the higher education provision has allowed the Talkback process to be an effective method for dealing with appeals and complaints, the College has revised their approach to take account of their membership of the Office of the Independent

Adjudicator (OIA) from September 2015. A revised Appeals and Complaints Procedure (August 2015) has been produced with the Higher Education Service Executive and Quality Officer taking responsibility for submission of relevant documents requested by the OIA.

2.92 Overall, the team found that the system for academic appeals and student complaints operated by the College is effective and concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.93 Work placements that are part of a learning programme, either with the University of Bedfordshire or Pearson, are undertaken using work placement guidance that is either determined by the University or the College. The procedures used by the College mirror that of the University and ensure there is safe and effective preparation, completion and review of work placements that comply with expected legal and statutory requirements together with ensuring clarity of the roles of those involved.

2.94 The College has entered into an agreement with Mindful Education to develop a blended learning HNC in Business. This development is underpinned by an Operations Manual that clearly sets out the responsibilities of both parties to ensure the successful delivery of the course.

2.95 The College's approach to the management of work placements and its arrangements for managing the relationship with Mindful Education at the College would enable Expectation B10 to be met.

2.96 In testing this Expectation the review team considered the guidance and documentation developed by the College and provided by the University of Bedfordshire. The team also held meetings with a range of staff members and students.

2.97 Staff from the College associated with the University of Bedfordshire courses were aware of their roles and responsibilities in supporting students in the work setting and feeding back on their performance. The University of Bedfordshire Link Tutor commented positively on the College's management of work placements and level of support provided to students and the number of tutor visits made to the workplace. Students met by the review team spoke about the value of work experience and support and considered it to be a positive experience.

2.98 The College is responsible for managing work experience on the Pearson Higher National Diploma Sport (Exercise Health and Fitness). The programme commenced in September 2014 and the two students on the second year of the programme will undertake their work placement in 2016. As part of their second year the students are completing the Employability Skills unit in semester one in preparation for work placement in semester two. Students are briefed on the College's work placement policy and provided with a work placement agreement that clearly sets out their responsibilities. The Placement Tutor ensures all health and safety checks are undertaken and also visits the work placement provider to ensure they are fully aware of purpose of the placement in the context of the course.

2.99 There is a clear understanding of the relationship between the College and Mindful Education. Mindful Education is responsible for the development of content for the proposed blended learning HNC Business and the College is responsible for recruiting, registering students and ensuring the delivery of quality assurance of the course in meeting the awarding organisation requirements. These responsibilities are clearly set out in the

agreement document and the arrangements confirmed in the meetings with the Principal and Senior Management. The course is due to commence in January 2016.

2.100 Overall, the review team finds that the College has in place processes and procedures to manage work placements and the relationship with Mindful Education. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation B10 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.101 The College offers no postgraduate research provision, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.103 Nine out of the 10 applicable Expectations in this area have been met with seven recommendations arising in total. Where the Expectations are met, the risks are considered low for five Expectations and moderate for four Expectations. Recommendations for these Expectations reflect insufficient emphasis and weaknesses in the operation of some elements of the College's quality assurance procedures. For the Expectation which is not met, Expectation B7, the risk is considered to be moderate due to the weaknesses confined to a small area of provision in progressing and monitoring actions linked to external examiner reports.

2.104 One feature of good practice was identified by the review team for this judgement area and this was the development of professional practice skills through the use of live assessment briefs. Other positive factors that contribute to the judgement area include: the support for level 3 students to make the transition to higher education; the use of programme level student focus groups; the involvement of student representatives in HESARs; the system of exam boards for Higher National programmes; and the management and support of student work experience.

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The main channels for dissemination of information about higher education provision are the College website, the College VLE, and student and unit handbooks. To ensure accuracy, a detailed chart describes the type of information, key responsibilities, the stages of checking and final sign-off. These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.2 The review team tested whether information was clear, fit for purpose and accessible by scrutinising the College website, VLE and other online software packages, (ProMonitor and the Quality Toolkit), and examining relevant documents such as the prospectus and programme handbooks. The team also met senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students.

3.3 The College has a dedicated higher education section on its website with accessible and up-to-date information about all its courses, mainly through the online Higher Education prospectus. The website includes key information for prospective students on how to apply, entry requirements, course duration, campus location, what the students will study on the course, the differences between qualifications, fees and funding and the progression routes.

3.4 The College's Customer Service Team (CST) is the 'public facing' element of the College. Training within team meetings is provided by the Higher Education Lead to ensure that all customer service executives on all campuses receive updates regarding course offerings, the application process, course content and funding/support opportunities available to prospective students. Higher Education Service Executive deals with all specific higher enquiries, initial enquiry, application and enrolment phases, and provides a single point of contact for higher education-related communications. The Higher Education Service Executive also delegates subject-specific enquiries to the relevant course leader from individual programmes when appropriate.

3.5 The accuracy and auditing of information provided in the Higher Education Prospectus was the sole responsibility of individual heads of school with a template provided by the Marketing Department. Information is provided by the Programme Coordinator and the Head of School then checks for accuracy before sending to the Marketing Department and sign-off by the Quality team. The awarding body partners also complete an audit of the public information displayed on partner websites, to ensure that information provided is accurate and standardised.

3.6 The review team heard from their meeting with students that they find the College prospectus fit for purpose. There was some minor criticism that not all additional costs related to their programmes were clear and transparent at the point of application. Many students preferred to have detailed course information, such as unit specifications, in order to help inform their choice of programme.

3.7 The format and information contained within the student handbook are not consistent across all programmes. Some handbooks are very comprehensive, while others lacked detail; some did not contain a programme specification, while others only used the programme specification. This variability was acknowledged by the College.

3.8 External examiner reports are made available to students on the School pages of the VLE, although the team observed that they are not always published in a way that makes them transparent and accessible to students. The review team also observed some out-of-date information available for staff on quality matters within the Quality Toolkit site. The review team therefore **recommends** that by September 2016 the College regularly reviews and updates higher education pages of the intranet to include reports and recommendations from external stakeholders.

3.8 The School pages of the VLE contain programme specifications, course handbooks, individual course materials including assignment briefs, lecture material and additional supporting material provided by lecturers which are periodically updated. This platform can be accessed onsite and remotely by students. The review team found that students are familiar with the VLE and find the resources to support their learning helpful.

3.9 An annual audit of the VLE takes place to ensure the availability and standards of compulsory course information and supplementary learning materials for students, including plans to develop the content of course pages over the next two years. The audit sets out minimum standards required by all course pages, and issues additional levels of awards for those course pages that exceed expectations. The audits have been in place for a number of years and will be reviewed for 2015-16 to include a number of higher education specific criteria and an increased emphasis and weighting on the usage of online assessment and feedback.

3.10 ProMonitor is used to track student progress and is available to students during the duration of their course. Lecturers are required to upload formative assessment grades (once confirmed by second marking/the appropriate assessment board) in a timely manner to ensure that students are provided with a live indication of their progress throughout the course. 'In-house' audits of lecturers' compliance with this process are randomly authorised by heads of school when necessary.

3.11 Overall, the review team found the College provides sufficient and relevant information for prospective and current students and concludes the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

3.12 In reaching its judgement concerning information about higher education provision, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.13 The review team found that information made available to the public by the College is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible. This is confirmed by the audit of public information on the College website by the College's awarding partners.

3.14 The College undertakes regular audits of its VLE to ensure that course pages meet minimum standards and continue to develop their content.

3.15 In assessing the effectiveness of the College in this area, the review team noted the variability in the format of, and information contained in, student handbooks, including programme specification information which contributed to a recommendation made under Expectation B4. The team also noted that there was some out-of-date information on quality matters for staff, and while external examiner reports are contained on course pages of the VLE, these are not always easily identifiable to students. The team makes one recommendation in this judgement area for the College to regularly review and update the higher education pages of the intranet. The review team considered this judgement area to be moderate risk.

3.16 Overall, the review team concludes that the quality of the information produced by the College about its provision **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 Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy sets out the College's approach to ensuring the continuing enhancement of its higher education provision. The focus is on continuous improvement which is supported by the systematic review of provision through annual monitoring and Self-Assessment Reports and associated Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) linked to student feedback and external examiner reports. The process is encapsulated in the College's Feedback Enhancement Loop which brings together external drivers and student engagement with improvements and reviews enabled through regular meetings of the College's committees, notably the Heads of School, Higher Education Academic Delivery teams, Academic Board and the Student Forums. The process is facilitated and enabled by the Higher Education Lead and his team.

4.2 The student voice is seen as a key to the success, development and enhancement of higher education provision within the College. The wider incorporation of student representation into groups has facilitated the consideration of the student views, and students are represented on Higher Education Assessment Review moderation panels. The College has convened a Student Experience and Enhancement Forum (SEEF), which provides students with a forum to voice viewpoints and influence the College's strategic development plans. The SEEF also allows students to contribute to the development of new courses, and the students are consulted as part of the Programme Approval Procedure.

4.3 The review team met staff and students to discuss enhancement strategies and mechanisms for the identification of opportunities for improvements to programmes and learning opportunities for higher education students. A range of documents were also reviewed including minutes of meetings and notes of student forums alongside annual monitoring reports and QIPs. The review team was also provided with examples of improvements made in response to student feedback including improved resources for the creative arts provision and quiet study spaces for higher education students, also well as improvements to online resources.

4.4 The systematic consideration of student feedback impacts on strategic thinking within the College. This includes sharing of feedback across provision through the Higher Education Academic Delivery Team meeting, and the development of standardisation of approaches to monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and strategies and practices to improve the student learning experience. Student feedback is also used to inform programme design and amendments, and forms a key part of the programme review process as set out in HESAR documentation and the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy. This includes both improvements in physical resources including additional resources and accommodation for photography and music and quiet higher education spaces, as well as the review and development of assessment practices and teaching including use of the VLE.

4.5 The Heads of School Higher Education meetings support lecturers and course leaders to develop responses to external examiner and student feedback. These meetings enable enhancements to be discussed at programme level as well as more broadly across higher education provision and the nature of improvements expected identified and

evaluated and priorities passed to senior management for consideration as part of the College's broader strategic development.

4.6 While QIPs identify actions based on external examiner and student feedback and have the potential to act as a driver for the enhancement of the student learning experience, not all actions have been implemented or monitored. This is highlighted in the external examiner report for HN Engineering, and discussed in Expectations B6 and B8. To ensure all actions are consistently monitored and outcomes reviewed, the review team **recommends** that by September 2016 the College builds on programme Quality Improvement Plans and the timely production of the Higher Education Self-Assessment Review reports to further implement the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy.

4.7 Digital literacy is seen as a key enhancement initiative by the College and it has invested in new staff and developed learning platforms to support student access to resources and support. This includes the introduction of online assessment and feedback and increased use of digital platforms to support learning both in class and outside the College. The VLE audits are supporting the enhancement of online materials along with the subscription to JSTOR to supplement the EBSCO online library resource. A laptop purchase scheme provides opportunity for students to buy a computer and support access to online and flexible learning support and to promote independent research and learning.

4.8 The range of Higher Education meetings supported by the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy enables the development of enhancements within and across higher education provision. The College uses both a deliberative meeting structure and the Higher Education Services Executive to facilitate discussions and identification of enhancement priorities. The involvement of senior managers in higher education meetings further supports the communication of messages to the executive level of the College.

4.9 The College has a clear deliberative meeting structure which allows staff from higher education programmes to meet and discuss areas for improvement at both programme and institution level. The student voice clearly informs enhancement priorities and student engagement is seen as central to improvements to the learning opportunities offered by the College. The Digital Strategy is under development and the College has committed significant resources to enhance student access to electronic resources which supports the development of the independent learner.

4.10 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The review team makes one recommendation in this area on the need for all actions arising in QIPs to be implemented and monitored and for the timely production of the HESAR which represents a moderate level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.12 The Expectation about enhancement is met and risk is considered moderate in this area. The College's approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities is set out in the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy and the process encapsulated by a Feedback Enhancement Loop. The review team found that there are appropriate quality assurance arrangements in place to identify opportunities for enhancement and deliberate steps are being taken at College-level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The student voice and systematic consideration of student feedback are key components of the system.

4.13 The team made one recommendation under the enhancement of student learning opportunities concerning weaknesses in the operation of the College's system of internal review and monitoring for one part of College's provision and therefore a weakness within the overall implementation of the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Strategy.

4.14 Overall, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1 The College has a Digital Evolution Strategy 2015-18, which is specific to higher education. It aims to evolve teaching, learning and assessment practise to meet the needs of an increasingly digitally demanding environment. The College continues to support and encourage staff in the use of new and innovative media and techniques within classrooms and aims for all assessments to be submitted and marked online. It also aims to prepare students to have the skills expected by both current and future employers.

5.2 The College approach encompasses building on the best practice of individual members of staff, adopting advances in teaching and learning technologies, and close work with local employers to address their needs. The Strategy sets out minimum achievements expected over the next three years and to establish the basis for future enhancements.

5.3 While the Digital Evolution Strategy is in an early stage of development and implementation, there are many initiatives and schemes are in place. The creation of the ILT Coordinator and E-Learning Mentor roles has enabled the development of digital skills for both staff and students. The VLE is being used to support interactive training materials for staff members and has resulted in a number of supplementary learning tools to enhance student learning such as online forums, student-built glossaries, online videos, quizzes and National Learning Network learning activities.

5.4 The Learning Resource Centre provides a wide range of online learning materials for both staff and students, such as tutor support sheets for VLE development, advanced internet searching tutorials, interactive referencing tutorials, development of study skills and support with revision. There is also access to an electronic journal resources such as JSTOR and EbscoHost.

5.5 One of the main aims of the Digital Evolution Strategy is for all assessments to be submitted and feedback provided online. Some programmes have already implemented this approach to varying extents. Higher education tutors and staffs have gained support from the ILT Coordinator and E-Learning Mentor, along with various training such as the Higher Education Away Day in July 2015. To ensure students are familiar with the process of online assessment, this is covered within the induction programme.

5.6 The College has invested in Smartboard Technology in all lecture rooms and trains staff regularly to ensure its effectiveness in enhancing learning in the classroom to the benefit of students. There is also a laptop purchase scheme which allows students to receive financial support towards the purchase of a laptop. Additionally, Microsoft Office 365 is available to all College enrolled students.

5.7 Software is used to track the progress of students throughout their course and has been adapted by the College to meet the specific requirements of higher education programmes.

5.8 The College is working closely with partner universities aligning its Digital Evolution Strategy with approaches such as the University of Northampton's Digital Transformation Agenda and compliance with online assessment and feedback practices of the University of Bedfordshire.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 30 to 33 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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