



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Trinity College Bristol

March 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Trinity College Bristol. The review took place from 8 to 11 March 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Mike Coulson
- Mrs Marian Stewart
- Mr Reece Horsley (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Trinity College Bristol 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 (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
 - the quality of student learning opportunities
 - the information provided about higher education provision
 - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- 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 check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

In reviewing Trinity College Bristol 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.

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.³ A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).⁴ 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 (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Trinity College Bristol

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Trinity College Bristol.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Trinity College Bristol:

- the thorough, holistic approach to considering individual student needs and circumstances through the application and admissions process (Expectation B2)
- the strong, embedded approach to staff scholarship which promotes active research and informs programme delivery (Expectation B3)
- the embedded culture of support for student learning which develops the academic, personal and professional potential of students (Expectation B4)
- the variety of external speakers that broaden student learning experiences (Expectation B4)
- the breadth and depth of contextual-based placements that enhances the student learning experience and provides relevant missional interaction with the community (Expectation B4, B10)
- the effective partnership between staff and students at all levels in enhancing the quality of learning opportunities (Expectation B5)
- the robust relationship between the College and placement settings in managing and supporting individual student learning needs (Expectation B10)
- the development, oversight and review of contextual training placements and subsequent high level of reflection that grounds theory in student practice (Enhancement, Expectation B4)
- the strategic approach to the development of leadership skills through the School of Leadership (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Trinity College Bristol.

By September 2016:

- ensure that formal minutes of all meetings are sufficiently detailed to clearly record decisions and actions assigned (Expectations B1, B8)
- ensure that the peer observation process fully and consistently considers the impact of teaching practices on student learning (Expectation B3)
- develop, implement and formalise a clear reporting structure and annual monitoring process to ensure internal strategic oversight of all postgraduate research programmes (Expectations B8, B11)

- clarify and formalise the process for the internal selection, approval and ongoing support of first and second supervisors (Expectation B11)
- ensure that access to an appropriate research environment is identified, recorded and systematically monitored for postgraduate research students studying remotely (Expectation B11).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- the steps being taken to implement additional measures to improve the detection of academic offences (Expectation B6).
- the steps being taken to provide a formal induction for research degree supervisors on the new policies and procedures (Expectation B11).

Theme: Student Employability

The College predominantly provides theological programmes that enable students to obtain the academic, personal and spiritual formation required by the Church of England for ordained ministry roles. The College makes extensive use of external inputs to support student employability through an integral programme of contextual placements, alternative placement settings, external speakers and links with other Christian-based organisations. Leadership skills for future roles are embedded within the curriculum and also complemented by a School of Leadership programme designed to enhance the skills required for ministerial careers.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

Trinity College Bristol has satisfactorily completed the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

About Trinity College Bristol

Trinity College Bristol (the College) is a Christian, evangelical, theological college located in the Stoke Bishop area of Bristol. The College dates from 1972, when it was formed through an amalgamation of three originally independent educational institutions, namely Clifton Theological College, Dalton House with St Michael's, and Tyndale Hall. The College jointly delivers theological and biblical programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research degree levels in partnership with Bristol Baptist College, which is situated 1.5 miles away across the Clifton Downs. Student enrolment for 2015-16 comprises 81 students on taught undergraduate programmes, 25 students taught at postgraduate level and a further 34 postgraduate research students.

The College mission is 'Shaping leaders of Christ-like character in community for a missional church'. This is underpinned by three theological themes and a set of values reflecting key themes of humility, wholeness, service, holiness, justice, worship, diversity and courage. The Strategic Plan underpinning this approach is currently being reviewed through a comprehensive programme of reflection on the College's current and future role as a provider of theological education and mission formation. A prime strategic objective is to

increase student recruitment and the College is giving consideration to the operational impacts of such expansion. A Strategic Overview document sets out how the College will review its existing Strategic Plan, take forward current initiatives and identify and develop new aims and objectives to ensure the continuing development of its mission and educational programmes.

In order to facilitate and maximise student learning opportunities, Trinity College Bristol and Bristol Baptist College set up a limited company in 2014, known as Trinity College with Bristol Baptist College Limited (TC-BBC Ltd). TC-BBC Ltd forms the Theological Education Institution (TEI) which contracts with Durham University and the Archbishops' Council of the Church of England on the common awards framework. TC-BBC Ltd has joint responsibility for maintaining standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The two colleges continue to be separate legal entities with separate Boards of Trustees, visions and strategic objectives although they share responsibilities for delivery and management of the academic provision. The membership of the joint company comprises the trustees of the two colleges and the board of directors comprises two members of each college's senior management team. Although established to manage the relationship with Durham University the joint company has also been used as the vehicle for contracting with the University of Aberdeen for the validation of postgraduate research degrees. There are clear detailed validation agreements in place between the joint company and both degree awarding bodies.

Since September 2014, the College has jointly delivered the Durham Common Awards framework, consisting of undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes in Theology, Mission and Ministry through a validation arrangement with Durham University. Similar taught provision is validated by the University of Bristol through separate bilateral contracts. However, this provision is discontinuing and current University of Bristol students will complete in summer 2016 (taught programmes) and 2020 (research programmes). Since 2015, the College has also jointly delivered postgraduate research degrees through a validation agreement with the University of Aberdeen. The College is in the progress of offering current students the opportunity to transfer to University of Aberdeen research degrees.

TC-BBC Ltd has established a joint academic committee structure to allow oversight and management of the academic taught programmes. TEI Management Committee (TEIMC) is the senior academic committee and includes joint college members, university representatives from the awarding bodies, and external stakeholders. TEIMC also acts as Academic Board for University of Bristol taught programmes. TEIMC receives reports from a Joint Faculty Board, which in turn is supported by three sub-committees: Quality Assurance Steering Group (QASG), the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) and the Curriculum Development Group (CDG). All committees have terms of reference and membership is equally divided between both colleges. In addition to the academic committees, a Joint Senior Management Team also operates which draws its membership from the senior leadership teams at both colleges. Below Joint Faculty level, individual college faculty meetings are held to discuss specific college issues. TC-BBC Ltd uses the awarding bodies' quality assurance and academic standards regulations, policies and procedures to manage and monitor academic programmes and has also developed joint policies where appropriate.

The Review Educational Oversight by QAA in 2012 concluded that confidence could be placed in the management of responsibilities for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Reliance could also be placed in the accuracy and completeness of information. The 2012 review team identified two areas of good practice regarding the active role played by students in quality assurance and the comprehensive arrangements for supporting applicants and these areas continue to feature as areas of good practice in the current review. The 2012 review team made an advisable recommendation regarding assessment feedback and although progress has been made, the current review team noted

that timeliness of feedback continues to be an area of consideration for the College. The three desirable recommendations regarding the inclusion of external markers in training, linking teaching observations and appraisal to planned staff development, and reviewing tutorial arrangements have all been satisfactorily progressed, with tutorial arrangements being a strength identified in the current review. The review team considers that the College takes appropriate and effective action with regards to progressing the outcomes from previous reviews.

Explanation of the findings about Trinity College Bristol

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

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 delivers higher education programmes validated by the University of Aberdeen, the University of Bristol and Durham University. These awarding bodies retain responsibility for the academic standards of their respective awards and ensure alignment of their programmes to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), professional and subject benchmarks and other relevant frameworks. University programme specifications are approved as part of the validation processes of the awarding bodies and provide core information including titling conventions, learning outcomes and module credit values.

1.2 The review team tested the approach by analysing key documents including the awarding bodies' validation agreements, policies, regulations and programme specifications and by meeting staff during the visit.

1.3 The awarding bodies provide clear guidance on the processes for setting and maintaining academic standards in validation agreements, the Theological Education Institution (TEI) Handbook and academic standards documentation. The institutional agreements set out the expectation that each programme is delivered in line with the approved programme specification and University academic policies and regulations. The awarding bodies are responsible through their validation processes for setting threshold

academic standards through clear and transparent learning outcomes as well as for ensuring that each qualification is allocated to the appropriate level of the FHEQ and meets the Subject Benchmark Statements for Theology. Assessment activity is aligned to learning outcomes and is approved as an integral part of programme validation. The external examiner reports confirm that the College is effective in managing programme delivery in order to maintain academic standards.

1.4 The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for allocating each qualification to the appropriate level of the FHEQ and for considering subject benchmarks and other relevant frameworks. The College is cognisant of these responsibilities and of the relevant frameworks that apply, and the review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

1.5 TCB-BBC Ltd use the awarding bodies' quality assurance and academic standards regulations, policies and procedures to govern and manage programme delivery and assessment. Common Awards are governed by the TEI Handbook and academic regulations produced by Durham University. Since September 2015, new postgraduate research provision is subject to the University of Aberdeen General Regulations for Research Degrees and University Academic Quality Handbook. University of Bristol quality assurance procedures and regulations apply to the remaining taught and research provision. Where appropriate, TCB-BBC Ltd has also generated its own policies within agreed parameters of its awarding bodies' policies and procedures.

1.6 As outlined above, the oversight and management of the relevant internal and external academic frameworks is undertaken through a joint committee structure. A Joint Faculty Board acts as the lead operational committee and reports to the TEIMC as the most senior academic committee for taught programmes. Adherence to the required academic frameworks and regulations is also monitored through the awarding bodies' Boards of Examiners.

1.7 The review team evaluated the approach to securing academic standards by reviewing key documentation including academic regulations, quality assurance handbooks and codes of practice, and meeting minutes and terms of reference. The team also met staff at the College and spoke with university representatives.

1.8 Staff whom the review team met demonstrate awareness of the academic regulations and frameworks that apply and these are made available to staff and students through handbooks and the virtual learning environment (VLE). Internally generated policies and procedures are detailed and comprehensive and include the Joint Faculty Development Policy, Joint Policy for Students with Particular Needs, Student Complaints Policy and Procedure and Policy on Retention of Assessed Work. Trinity College also has its own Policy on Attendance, which clearly details on a week-by-week basis the College's expectation of ordinands' attendance at College.

1.9 All joint committees and panels have detailed terms of reference and staff and student membership of each committee is equally divided between both colleges. The joint committee structure provides a robust framework for the oversight and management of taught provision although is less effective in ensuring effective institutional oversight of postgraduate research provision (see section B8). Minutes of meetings, including Boards of Examiners, demonstrate that academic regulations are appropriately applied and monitored. Furthermore, external examiner reports and annual monitoring reports confirm that the College is compliant with the academic quality assurance regulations of its awarding bodies.

1.10 Appropriate academic frameworks and regulations are in place to support the maintenance of academic standards. Overall, these are well understood and applied effectively and the review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

1.11 The definitive records for each programme are approved and maintained by the respective awarding bodies. In the case of Common Awards, bespoke programme specifications are approved by Durham University, based on a selection of modules by TC-BBC Ltd from the Common Awards module descriptors. Module delivery guides are developed internally to outline specific content and delivery. Similarly, programme specifications have been approved by the University of Bristol following consultation with the College, as outlined in the institutional agreement.

1.12 Assessment regulations are available through the awarding bodies' websites and through the College VLE and are used to ensure that students complete the necessary modules to progress through their awards. Transcripts and certificates are produced by the awarding bodies and are provided to students on completion of the programme of study.

1.13 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach through the review of key documentation, including the awarding bodies' policies and procedures, programme specifications, module descriptors and delivery guides. The team also met members of teaching staff, senior managers and students to discuss reference points for delivery and assessment.

1.14 Programme specifications provide clear and comprehensive information to students, including relevant academic regulatory frameworks, programme structure, credit awards and learning outcomes. Students' use of the programme specifications is supported by Student Handbooks. Students and staff whom the team met confirmed that module descriptors are made easily available and are used as a clear point of reference. Delivery guides for common awards programmes are used extensively. Where changes are made to programmes, these are approved through a formal process and communicated to staff in order to amend delivery.

1.15 Definitive programme records are approved and maintained by the degree-awarding bodies, and the review team confirms that these are appropriately adapted and used at College level as the reference point for delivery and assessment. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16 The academic standards of awards are set and approved by the degree-awarding bodies through the validation processes of the respective universities, in collaboration with the denominational body and other educational partners where appropriate. The taught programmes validated by Durham University form part of the Durham Common Awards (for Theological programmes) and satisfy the Baptist Union of Great Britain Core Competences and Church of England Ordination requirements. Regulations for the approval of programmes are set out on the Durham Common Awards website and involve a two-stage curriculum development and validation process. Similarly, regulations governing the approval of new programmes by the University of Aberdeen are outlined on the University's website. Changes to programmes can only be made through formal approval processes outlined by the awarding bodies.

1.17 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing relevant policies and validation documentation and discussing approval processes with College staff and University Liaison Officers during the visit.

1.18 The process for the design and development of programmes within the common awards framework is clearly defined by Durham University on its website and in a comprehensive briefing pack. This outlines the College's responsibilities and staff whom the review team met are cognisant of their responsibilities for standards. TC-BBC Ltd has selected desired modules, constructed appropriate pathways for prospective ministerial students from both denominations and created programme regulations and module tables for each programme. The academic standards outlined in these modules have subsequently been approved by the University. This includes the design and subsequent approval of specific modules to meet the criteria for the children and youth work pathway. Durham University processes for approving the taught programmes are iterative and thorough and staff confirm that benchmarking of modules was approved by the University through this process.

1.19 Similarly, responsibility for setting academic standards for postgraduate research programmes is exercised by the University of Aberdeen through its validation processes. The process consists of the submission of documentation by the College and a validation panel meeting. The validation resulted in a detailed report recommending approval of postgraduate research degrees with no attached conditions.

1.20 The degree-awarding bodies have established and consistently implemented processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure academic standards are set appropriately in relation to internal and national academic frameworks. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

1.21 Each of the three validating universities provides regulations and requirements within the validation agreements to ensure that relevant academic standards are satisfied and that the achievement of learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment processes. The College applies the assessment policies and regulations of the respective awarding bodies and has supplemented this for taught programmes with internal policies to guide assessment marking and to ensure that students comply with good academic practice. The universities oversee compliance for taught provision through representation on College academic committees, Boards of Examiners and through the appointment of external examiners. For postgraduate research programmes, the universities maintain oversight of standards through university-appointed committees and external examiners.

1.22 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing documentation, including assessment policies and information on the VLE. In addition, the team met University Liaison Officers and staff and students at the College.

1.23 There is clear guidance for academic staff regarding the delivery of taught modules, including learning outcomes and assessment specifications. Programme specifications contain clear details of qualifications and modules mapped to learning outcomes. Overarching module descriptors contain the learning outcomes for each module and are used by staff when setting module content and assessment.

1.24 Sample assignment briefs demonstrate that learning outcomes are clearly linked to the achievement of assessment criteria. Comprehensive information regarding assessment requirements and regulations is made available to students via the VLE, and assessment criteria are clearly explained to students.

1.25 The College has robust second-marking procedures in place. Student achievement is systematically confirmed through Boards of Examiners, which are also attended by the external examiner and University Liaison Officer, with clear information on the roles and responsibilities of all involved. External examiner reports confirm that the academic standards and criteria of the awarding bodies are applied to programme delivery and assessment processes. The TEIMC, which includes Durham University representation, is effective in carrying out its required duties including consideration of programme specifications, module reviews, external examiner reports and student feedback.

1.26 The review team considers that the degree-awarding bodies have appropriate procedures to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded appropriately and that College processes are effective and understood internally. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

1.27 Monitoring and review of the academic standards of programmes is undertaken through processes defined by the three validating universities. Programmes running under the common awards framework are reviewed annually by Durham University as part of the Annual Self-Evaluation (ASE) process. Programmes validated by the University of Bristol are reviewed by the University following submission of an annual programme review prepared by TC-BBC Ltd. Postgraduate research programmes are reviewed by the University of Aberdeen following receipt of an Annual Monitoring Report and through a Partnership Board, although as this provision only commenced in September 2015, this process has not yet been implemented. External examiner reports are also used to monitor the alignment of programmes with academic standards and form a key part of annual monitoring.

1.28 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing relevant documentation including policies, annual monitoring reports and minutes. In addition, the team met University Liaison Officers and staff and students at the College.

1.29 The first annual monitoring report within the ASE process was submitted to Durham University for the academic year 2014-15. The report is thorough and open, in that it refers to work carried out to address action points raised in QAA Action Plans and the Church of England Quality in Formation reviews carried out in 2014-15. Due to conflicts in the timescale, the report was compiled quickly and did not fully follow the normal committee route for internal approval. Revised timings have since been agreed to facilitate a more suitable timescale for completion. The 2014-15 APR for University of Bristol programmes took the form of a meeting between senior academic staff and University representatives, within an appropriate timescale and recorded within a template prescribed by the University. No formal feedback has been received to date from the universities on the reports submitted, although representatives whom the team met confirmed that the reports are comprehensive and fit for purpose.

1.30 There is a clearly defined and robust process for dealing with any recommendations arising from annual monitoring reports. These are considered by Joint Faculty Board and the Quality Assurance Steering Group (QASG), and are included within the quality assurance action plan maintained and monitored by the QASG. External examiner reports confirm that programmes meet the required academic standards.

1.31 The degree-awarding bodies operate appropriate processes for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure that the required academic standards are being maintained. Overall, the College implements these processes effectively and the review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

1.32 External input in setting and maintaining standards is principally obtained through the engagement of external advisers during programme approval and through the use of external examiners to review programme management, quality assurance and delivery. The degree-awarding bodies retain responsibility for the involvement of external advisers during programme design and validation stages and for the appointment and induction of external examiners. In addition, external input is obtained through the relationships with the denominational bodies and other Theological Educational Institutions (TEIs) within the common awards network. External experts are also represented on the TEIMC.

1.33 The review team explored the role of externality in securing academic standards and contextual placement experiences through analysis of degree-awarding body policies and procedures, external reports, action plans and by discussing the approach with staff at the College.

1.34 External examiners ensure that learning outcomes and academic standards are met through appropriate assessment and quality management processes, as specified in the external examiner handbooks and evidenced by their reports. These are in turn rigorously scrutinised and responded to appropriately through the academic committee structure. External examiner reports confirm that programmes meet the academic standards and quality assurance requirements of the awarding body. Staff whom the team met are fully conversant with the awarding body requirements for external examining and operate effective processes for engaging with recommendations from external examiners' reports.

1.35 The College is subject to quinquennial inspection on behalf of the House of Bishops of the Church of England. The Quality in Formation panel of the Ministry Council carried out their last inspection in 2012. Recommendations made were responded to promptly, and the follow-up visit concluded that all recommendations had been acted on in a timely and effective manner, leading to a more integrated system for students.

1.36 The College engages appropriately with the awarding partner procedures for involving external and independent expertise and has introduced its own externality in its senior academic committee. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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: Summary of findings

1.37 In determining its judgement on the maintenance of academic standards of awards at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low in all cases.

1.38 The approach to maintaining academic standards at the College is largely defined by the validating bodies and the College complies with the established academic frameworks and regulations of the universities. Responsibility for oversight of the maintenance of standards is vested in the joint committee and management structures. Staff are familiar with the responsibilities that are assigned to the College with regards to academic standards and there is appropriate external engagement and oversight of standards through the awarding body and through the use of external examiners.

1.39 Overall, the review team concludes that the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies 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 As outlined in section A3.1, the awarding bodies define the processes for the final approval of programmes. This requires the submission of documentation from the College followed by validation panels led by university representatives. The College use the joint company, TC-BBC Ltd, as the vehicle for contracting with the awarding bodies and uses the joint committee structure for internal consideration of the design and development of programmes prior to submission to the respective university.

2.2 Changes to the overarching programmes or individual modules within the common awards framework require approval from Durham University and the Church of England as key stakeholder. Any proposals are dealt with by a TEI Forum Continuing Implementation Group, which includes a representative from TC-BBC Ltd. Similarly, any changes to the University of Bristol awards require University approval, although as these awards are discontinuing, no further changes are proposed. Documentation supplied to the awarding bodies is clear and appropriately detailed.

2.3 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing policy and process documents, including minutes of formal meetings, submission documents and validation reports. In addition, the team met staff and student representatives to discuss the approach.

2.4 TC-BBC Ltd have an effective mechanism for formulating the original submission proposal for approval under the common awards framework. By creating a joint company and a joint faculty, the colleges have been able to work well together to share resources and to meet all required objectives of their respective denominations. All joint academic committees comprise representatives from both colleges, while the continued operation of the two individual faculties allows specific college-related issues to be addressed.

2.5 A new Curriculum and Development Group (CDG) has been recently formed on the recommendation from Quality Assurance Steering Group (QASG) to clarify and strengthen internal processes for curriculum changes. The CDG receives development proposals and/or module changes and provides the necessary independence from those teaching a particular module. The CDG reports to the Joint Faculty Board (and/or the Joint Senior Management Team where strategic decisions are required) and proposals are then sent to the Teaching and Learning Committee and TEIMC, the latter of which has university representation. The CDG first met in autumn 2015, making proposals that were subsequently considered by Faculty in October and updating TEIMC on progress. The lack of student representation on the CDG to date, contradictory to its terms of reference, has limited the student voice in discussions, although staff plan to rectify this for the next meeting in May 2016.

2.6 Scrutiny of the minutes of different academic meetings indicates an appropriate flow of information between committees, with Joint Faculty Board acting as the controlling decision-making body. Minutes of formal academic committee meetings include matters

arising from previous minutes, but do not consistently record a clear audit trail of discussions, decisions, processes/documents approved and actions assigned and addressed. For example, the text in Joint Faculty Board minutes, provided as evidence of formal approval of a required document to be submitted to Durham University, merely refers to a section of the document and thanks everyone who contributed. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensures that formal minutes of all meetings are sufficiently detailed to record decisions and actions assigned.

2.7 The review team considers that effective processes are operated for the design, development and approval of programmes prior to submission through university validation processes. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.8 The College operates a joint admissions policy approved by Durham University for applicants to the Common Awards framework. This policy is supplemented by College-specific additional guidance for those interviewing potential students. The administration of admissions to taught programmes is undertaken by the college to which the student is applying. Following enquiry, prospective students are required to complete the relevant college application form and are invited to attend an interview. Postgraduate research degree admissions to both colleges are managed by staff at Trinity College and are considered through the joint Research Applications Committee, which meets termly.

2.9 The review team explored the approach by analysing relevant documentation on admissions and discussing the process with staff and students involved with the recruitment, selection and admissions process.

2.10 The joint admissions policy clearly sets out staff responsibilities for the selection of students. The administration of admissions is consistent and compliance with the policy is achieved through staff having specific roles in the process, which are clearly defined and published in the policy. The named person in each case remains the main contact with the applicant until the point of enrolment and in some circumstances until graduation. Faculty staff involved with interviewing go through periodic training and new interviewers shadow more experienced colleagues in the first instance. Records of interviews are made, including an assessment of the candidates against defined criteria, and the involvement of multiple staff in the decision helps to ensure parity and fairness. The interview records are used as a basis for judgements and applicants are contacted promptly following interview with a decision and details of any specified conditions for entry. In accordance with Durham University policy, appeals against admissions decisions are not permitted.

2.11 All applicants who meet the minimum requirements for entry are subject to a thorough interview process. A robust process of interviewing takes place, which includes three parts covering vocation, training and practical requirements. During the interview programme, candidates routinely meet academic staff and support staff, including the placement coordinator, and may also meet the Principal, disability adviser, current students, external stakeholders and other faculty staff. Candidates and their families also have the opportunity to attend lectures and participate in the community lunch. The College gives thorough consideration to the personal needs of the students and their family and provides advice and support on relocation and schooling. Students whom the team met confirmed that the College approach to admissions is both rigorous and highly individualised to support the needs of each candidate. The interview process focuses on informing and advising candidates as well as assessment for suitability. Student development is placed centrally to the admissions process with policies and systems in place to support successful transition, both before and after student arrival. The thorough, holistic approach to considering individual student needs and circumstances through the application and admissions process is **good practice**.

2.12 Applications for postgraduate research programmes are considered by the joint Research Applications Committee (RAC), which also considers the suitability and capacity for proposed first supervisor arrangements. Staff from both Colleges are involved in approving admissions decisions through RAC and all acceptances and rejections are reported to the University for confirmation. Recruitment numbers are set annually by senior management to reflect resources and are reported through the annual monitoring process.

2.13 The review team considers that a thorough approach is in place for recruiting, selecting and admitting students using a consistent method and involving a high level of student support at all stages. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.14 The College seeks to promote an inclusive learning experience through the promotion of equality, diversity and equal opportunity. The approach stems from the strategic intent of the College to continue developing and enhancing its educational provision in partnership with Bristol Baptist College. The shared committee and management structure takes responsibility for monitoring and providing leadership in developing teaching strategies and enhancing academic and scholarship activities. A joint Staff Development Policy outlines opportunities and expectations on professional development.

2.15 The review team tested the approach by reviewing a range of evidence relating to teaching and learning, including developmental staff support and peer observations. The team also met senior staff, academic staff and students.

2.16 Teaching and learning is considered throughout the committee structure. The joint Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) is responsible for overseeing standards of teaching and learning, and provides a facility for the sharing of good practice. The TEIMC and Quality Assurance Steering Group also consider and monitor aspects of standards and quality of learning and teaching. Joint Faculty Board meetings consider and plan staff development activities and provide a forum for discussions on scholarship activities, sabbaticals and research publications. Weekly faculty meetings enable staff to reflect on the students' learning, and to discuss programme structure and delivery and the needs of individual students. Teaching staff use weekly faculty meetings, Joint Faculty Board and TLC to reflect on the student learning environment and share good practice.

2.17 The joint Staff Development Policy provides transparent and comprehensive information on the nature and range of staff development activities available to College staff. The College ensures that its teaching staff have appropriate academic qualifications and many hold doctoral qualifications and are ordained Church of England Ministers. There is a robust cycle of continuous professional development designed to support and extend the range of classroom teaching strategies, as well as to make staff aware of new technological initiatives. New staff undergo a formal induction and are allocated a peer mentor.

2.18 Scholarly activity by staff to improve student learning and assessment is held in high regard. Faculty staff attend a range of external and in-house conferences and seminars. In particular, the College runs joint Teaching and Learning Workshops which are held three times each academic year. These workshops are led by suitably qualified internal and/or external specialists and are valued by staff. Workshops are often informed by current issues arising from a termly review of teaching and learning led by the Trinity College Director of Learning. The current upgrade to the VLE will contain an online repository for acknowledged good practice in teaching and learning, which the College hopes to be fully operational by September 2016.

2.19 Full-time teaching staff are eligible for a sabbatical after a defined period of service. Sabbaticals provide staff with the time and opportunity to conduct active research to enhance their knowledge and teaching skills. Staff are supported by the College in

presenting papers at national and international conferences and are actively encouraged to publish work. The College provides teaching staff with one full day a week to undertake self-directed activity, which may take the form of scholarly or research activity, or the preparation of journal, book or conference materials, or teaching materials. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students commented on the strength of research activity by staff and how this impacted positively on their learning experience. The strong, embedded approach to staff scholarship promotes active research and informs programme delivery and is therefore **good practice**.

2.20 There is a clearly defined process of peer observation, which ensures that all members of teaching staff, including part-time staff, are reviewed once each academic year. The Peer Observation Schedule provides clear information on staff teaching commitments so that an observation can be mutually agreed between observer and observee. Teaching staff report that both peer observations are valued and meaningful. The observation record form requires the observer to comment against three identified criteria, although there is no formal requirement that the observer comments on student learning as part of the observation process, unless this has been requested by the observee prior to the observation. The team therefore **recommends** that the College ensures that the peer observation process fully and consistently considers the impact of teaching practices on student learning.

2.21 Completed observation forms are held by the course leader and are used to inform annual appraisals, as well as to identify and disseminate good practice. Peer observation reports feed into thorough teaching staff annual appraisals whereby the Principal carries out an annual appraisal interview with all College teaching and support staff. Informal developmental discussions also take place throughout the academic year. Staff complete the Appraisal Form to provide a focus for discussion and to identify targets for personal and professional development. The appraisal sessions are valued by teaching staff.

2.22 Student representatives are encouraged to raise issues relating to teaching and learning at faculty meetings and TLC. Students whom the team met praised the high standard of teaching received, and commented on the wide range of teaching strategies used by staff to engage and support their learning. Students commented positively on the accessibility of teaching staff and the cross-denominational teaching approach on modules, which widened student perspectives.

2.23 Overall, the review team considers that there is a robust approach to enhancing the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices which is clearly articulated and systematically reviewed. The approach has a positive impact on the student and staff experience and the team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.24 The Trinity College Strategic Overview 2016 and Strategic Plan 2015-2016 embeds the current Church of England key emphases in ensuring ministerial training is adaptable, flexible and missional. Trinity College seeks to achieve these priorities by ensuring that it provides ordinand training, theological academic programmes and research programmes of the highest quality through a cycle of strategic and operational planning, quality assurance and enhancement. The joint Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of learning opportunities provided within the classroom setting, and on placement. Annual reports produced internally, and to meet monitoring requirements of the awarding bodies, are used to evaluate arrangements and resources.

2.25 The review team explored the approach through the review of relevant documentation including strategic plans, learning support policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, resources and guides. In addition, the team met students and staff to discuss the support arrangements.

2.26 New students on taught programmes attend an informative Welcome Week, which is composed of individual Trinity College activities and shared events with the Bristol Baptist College. The suite of Welcome Week and induction activities are comprehensive and wide ranging. Activities include religious and theological discussions, academic study skills and programme introductions. Families are also invited to attend some of the religious Welcome Week activities. The College makes regular use of alumni as speakers during Welcome Week, and as part of the ministry programme. Other Welcome Week speakers include practice tutors and placement supervisors (see section B11 for information on postgraduate research student induction).

2.27 The joint Additional Needs Policy provides clear guidance to ensure that students with additional needs are provided with the learning or physical resources required to support their studies. A Trinity College Disability Adviser supports students with particular learning or physical needs at both colleges. The Adviser provides staff training on the specific support a student may require, and makes staff aware of the range of technological support and staff development materials available. For example, the College is currently supporting a deaf student through the provision of a signer in taught classes and teaching staff have received specific training from the Disability Adviser. Teaching staff have also recently attended a workshop on dyslexia.

2.28 Students receive library inductions and instruction on how to access e-texts and stores of research data. Library and teaching staff liaise to ensure that library stocks are current and relevant. Students whom the team met stated that requests for new or additional copies of existing texts are responded to promptly by the Librarian. Students have access to both college libraries, providing them with access to more than 90,000 hard copy publications as well as extensive e-resources via the College VLE and university portals. Initial access issues experienced by Durham Common Awards students to University resources are now being resolved by the Librarian. Students reported that the level of module information posted on the VLE is extensive, and often uploaded ahead of module delivery. Students have been involved in trialling an upgraded VLE due to be implemented in September 2016.

2.29 Study skills input is provided at induction and followed by an extended series of afternoon study skills sessions. Students have access to a Style Guide on assessments, study skills publications and advice on the VLE and university partner portals. Although students whom the team met are aware of university resources, students prefer to seek academic study skills support from their teaching team and from the Librarian, whose support, accessibility and advice is considered practical and valuable.

2.30 The College has a clear vision on the support it will provide to ensure academic achievement and ministry formation. The College's expectations of academic and ministry formation are discussed and reinforced at weekly pastoral group meetings, which enable students to share and discuss personal, academic and ministry formation issues and experiences with peers and teaching staff. The pastoral group sessions also provide opportunities to pray together and students whom the team met strongly endorsed the supportive environment created at these meetings. Full-time students and ordinands have scheduled personal tutorials with a designated College tutor. Part-time students do not have timetabled formal tutorials, although students confirmed that staff are accessible and helpful should an academic or pastoral issue arise.

2.31 As outlined in paragraphs above, the College provides an extensive support infrastructure for students which pervades all aspects of the student experience and is highly regarded by students. The embedded culture of support for student learning develops the academic, personal and professional potential of students and is **good practice**.

2.32 The College makes effective use of external speakers to support student learning. External speakers and alumni are an integral part of the induction programme and are regularly involved in supporting the delivery of module content. The College invites speakers of different faiths and holds conferences and research seminars accessible to all students. External speakers provide a breadth and depth to the induction process and assist students with an initial understanding of their programme of study, placements and mission formation. In order to assist students in making the transition to parochial ministry, the College holds a leaving ordinands programme, which includes sessions delivered by external experts on financial, parochial and ministry issues. The variety of external speakers broadens student learning experiences and is **good practice**.

2.33 In order to facilitate mission formation for ordinands the College supports students in a range of placements. Contextual placements take place over the full three years of study and require students to spend time each week engaging in supervised parish activities, and to spend Sundays supporting the incumbent in parish and preaching responsibilities. During the contextual placement, students are supported by a placement supervisor, a College supervisor and through the pastoral group of student peers that meets weekly. In addition, students also undertake summer block placements in order to extend their experiences and are encouraged to undertake these in alternative or contrasting contexts to their core placement. Placement preparation begins at the applicant interview stage and is embedded throughout the student experience, providing both breadth and depth of knowledge of the nature and context of Church of England parishes and allowing opportunities to embed and reflect on theory and practice within the curriculum. The placement also supports students in achieving the Church of England mission criteria. Students whom the team met are highly positive about the integral nature of the placement experience and the invaluable and fulfilling opportunities that it provides in self-development and preparing for ministry. The regular pastoral meetings also provide excellent opportunities to discuss and reflect on practice on an ongoing basis. The breadth and depth of contextual placements enhances the student learning experience and provides relevant missional interaction with the community, and is **good practice**. Additionally, the high level of student reflection encouraged by the placement experience grounds theory in students' practice and is recognised elsewhere in this report as good practice (see section on Enhancement).

2.34 The joint committee structure allows for effective oversight of teaching, learning and placement activities. Following the annual self-evaluation process, the College produces annual reports for the respective university partners and action plans. These are subsequently monitored by the joint Quality Assurance Steering Group and the Teaching and Learning Committee to assess progress made in resolving any identified issues or recommendations.

2.35 The College provides extensive opportunities and resources to taught students to develop their personal, professional and academic potential and has effective arrangements for monitoring. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.36 The College uses formal and informal routes for engaging with students, both as an individual college and collectively through TC-BBC Ltd. The main formal mechanism is the use of elected student representation at programme, faculty and joint college deliberative meetings. Other formal mechanisms include module evaluations, end of year evaluation reports, membership of ad hoc working groups, regular meetings between the Student President and the Principal, and termly Principal's Forum meetings between senior managers and the student body. The College also encourages an informal culture for students to engage as partners in their education experience through personal tutoring, weekly pastoral groups, co-research activities and shared lunchtimes.

2.37 The review team explored the approach to student engagement during the visit by reviewing relevant documentation and discussing the provision of opportunities and experiences of staff and students.

2.38 The student representative process is well established and representatives are specified within the terms of reference for each of the formal committees, ensuring widespread systematic engagement in quality assurance processes. A student representative is also present as a participating member of the Board of Trustees.

2.39 Elected representatives are in place at all levels of the College, including a Student President, Learning Representative and a Student Representative for part-time students. These representatives sit on the Student Executive Committee, which meets the senior management team each term. This works effectively, although the College intends to systematise further the approach to education enhancement within this process. In addition, the Student President meets the Principal on a weekly basis and these regular, formal meetings enable the concerns of students and suggestions for improvements to be heard and acted upon at the highest level.

2.40 Representatives are supported in their role through regular conversations with the Principal in addition to support from the Academic Registrar, who provides supporting documentation for students at each committee where a student is present. Student representatives are encouraged to act autonomously within their roles, present papers to meetings and fully participate in decision-making opportunities.

2.41 Postgraduate research students have not been formally represented within the College committee structure to date, although there were mixed views from the students whom the team met on whether this is desirable and practical. Formal representation for University of Aberdeen students is included in the Partnership Board which will meet in October 2016. Research students have regular formal channels of communication with their research supervisors, contribute to progress reports and also have informal opportunities to raise issues with the Director of Postgraduate Research and the Postgraduate Research Administrator.

2.42 A new approach to online module evaluations for taught programmes was implemented from January 2016 to replace the rolling programme of module evaluations previously undertaken. Data from the annual End of Year Evaluation are discussed with students at faculty and Joint Faculty Board meetings and areas for enhancement are

identified and planned. These form part of the annual monitoring process, although responses to survey data by faculty are also returned to students in order to keep the wider student body informed of actions.

2.43 Trinity College holds a termly Principal's Forum at which the Principal and senior staff share information and views with the collective student body. Students whom the team met described the meeting as more formal and corporate than other forms of feedback and cited useful items that had been discussed. The forum establishes a community approach to working in partnership and there is a clear commitment to removing barriers to engagement.

2.44 A strong student-staff partnership is further demonstrated through the use of ad hoc working groups instigated by staff or students, such as the group constituted to review student workload expectations. Student participation is invited at an early stage in the consideration of revisions to the curriculum. For instance, the development and design of the School of Leadership programme began with a working group consisting of staff, faculty and students. Furthermore, the strategic approach to the provision of placements was determined by a working group of students and staff and involved widespread consultations with the student body and wider faculty. Students whom the team met cited a number of changes that had been made in response to student feedback and are highly positive about the timeliness of actions taken and the information provided.

2.45 The various formal and informal mechanisms for student engagement are extensive and are highly effective in encouraging student participation in the assurance and enhancement of the learning experience. The high level of partnership between staff and students in enhancing the quality of learning opportunities is therefore **good practice**.

2.46 The review team considers that students have a comprehensive range of opportunities to work both formally and informally in partnership with the College to shape their educational experience. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.47 The College applies the assessment policies provided by the awarding bodies, supplemented for taught programmes by joint TC-BBC Ltd policies and processes. Assessment activities and criteria are approved at validation in accordance with the assessment regulations provided by the university. A module descriptor and delivery guide is produced for each module taught as part of the Durham Common Awards framework, which outlines aims, learning outcomes and assignment options. The University provides marking criteria and feedback forms and additional information is made available by the College to students on assessment and academic practice. All staff involved in marking and internal moderation are guided by appropriate policies and are approved by the awarding body on an annual basis. Procedures for the consideration of accreditation of prior learning (APL) and prior experiential learning (APEL) are made available by Durham University. Assessment decisions are considered and approved through formally constituted Boards of Examiners and overseen by external examiners appointed by the awarding bodies.

2.48 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing policy and process documents pertaining to assessment, including scrutiny of information on the VLE and samples of assessment marking and feedback. In addition, the review team met staff and students to discuss their experiences of assessment.

2.49 Module descriptors and delivery guides are highly detailed and effective use is made of the VLE in disseminating information to students. Module aims, learning outcomes and assessment tasks are also discussed in detail with students at the start of each module and a schedule of academic deadlines is published at the start of the year. Staff take care to ensure that the approved assessment tasks are appropriate for demonstrating the learning outcomes, and the effectiveness of this approach is confirmed in the positive feedback from student surveys.

2.50 Staff and students discuss assessment and grading criteria to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. A stringent system is in place to ensure that assignments are submitted, marked and moderated anonymously. There is a defined process of moderation, which is effective in ensuring parity between markers, and all submitted work is made available to the external examiner for scrutiny. The external examiner's report confirms the effectiveness of the moderation process. Staff understand their responsibilities and are supported in their assessment practice through a range of internal workshops and external opportunities.

2.51 Feedback on assessed work is detailed. Students whom the team met confirmed that the majority of assignment feedback received is highly developmental and gives clear information about areas for improvement. Although the College's marking policy recommends that feedback be provided within five weeks, students confirmed that this is not always achieved due to staff workloads. However, students expressed a preference to wait longer and have their work marked by the lecturer, rather than by an external marker within the stated timescale. Deadlines are monitored by the Academic Registrar, who ensures that students are kept fully informed of any delays.

2.52 Students are given clear guidance on academic misconduct and the avoidance of plagiarism during induction and on the VLE. Students whom the team met confirmed that this is heavily emphasised by staff, and are aware of what constitutes unacceptable academic practice. Postgraduate research students on University of Bristol programmes are required to submit their work via plagiarism-detection software. Implementation of plagiarism-detection software for other programmes has been delayed although it is now planned for September 2016. Academic staff confirmed that a small number of plagiarism cases have been identified, the majority of which have been unintentional, but staff are cognisant that some instances may have been missed. The review team therefore **affirms** the steps being taken to implement additional measures to improve the detection of academic offences.

2.53 There is clear definition of the composition, roles and responsibilities of all Boards of Examiners, which include the external examiner and one or more university representative. The Boards of Examiners apply university regulations clearly and consistently in regard to student progression, transfer between programmes and the award of credit and qualifications. Decisions are recorded accurately and communicated promptly to students in accordance with stated timescales. Feedback on assessment policies, regulations and processes is included in the annual monitoring reports to the awarding universities. The effectiveness of the College approach to teaching, learning and assessment is shown by the 100 per cent pass rate as described in the annual data return.

2.54 There is a clearly defined policy for APL and APEL which is implemented effectively, particularly for those students who have transferred from University of Bristol to Durham University awards. The College maintains statistics of students for whom the APL policy is implemented, which has been higher than normal in the last two years due to existing students changing between awarding bodies.

2.55 Overall, the review team considers that the College operates valid and reliable processes of assessment. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.56 The awarding bodies retain responsibility for the appointment and induction of external examiners, who review academic and qualification standards, research and assessment processes, and the quality assurance of the programmes delivered on their behalf. Currently the same external examiner has been appointed by both Durham University and the University of Bristol to oversee the new provision and teach-out arrangements for the common awards. External examiner arrangements for research degrees are also managed by the awarding bodies and responsibilities are outlined in the relevant policies and procedures.

2.57 The review team considered the external examining processes and outcomes through a review of relevant university policies, procedures and guidelines, external examiner reports and associated action plans. The team also met staff and held discussions on external examining with students.

2.58 External examiner visits are arranged by the Trinity College Academic Registrar and provide the opportunity for the examiner to review assignment briefs, assessed work and assignment feedback and to hold meetings with College staff and students. The external examiner also reviews progress made on previous recommendations and evaluates the programme performance in accordance with the University's documented criteria. The external examiner and University representatives are invited to attend the Boards of Examiners held at the College and the conduct of these is in accordance with university regulations. Overall, external examiner reports comment favourably on the academic standards and delivery of programmes.

2.59 The College systematically considers external examiner reports and uses them effectively to enhance its taught provision. The Academic Registrar receives and circulates the external examiner reports to senior staff and course teams. The reports are formally considered at Joint Faculty Board meetings, resulting in a recorded and agreed response. External examiner reports and Joint Faculty Board decisions are reviewed at TEIMC, the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) and faculty meetings. University partners maintain oversight of the College's progress in addressing any issues raised. External examiner report actions and agreed responses form part of the annual monitoring process. Student representatives attend Joint Faculty Board and TLC meetings where reports are discussed. While external examiner reports are made available on the VLE, not all students are aware of where and how to access the reports or are familiar with the purpose of the role. Staff whom the team met are fully conversant with the processes for managing external examiner input and some are undertaking external examiner appointments themselves at other institutions.

2.60 The review team considers that the College has robust processes for monitoring and reviewing external examiner comment and fulfils the requirements of the degree-awarding bodies. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.61 The internal academic committee structure enables ongoing monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning on taught programmes, as well as providing oversight of the annual review process. As outlined in section A3.2, each of the awarding bodies requires monitoring activity to be undertaken, resulting in an annual report submitted to the respective university. The Quality Assurance Standing Group (QASG) oversees monitoring and self-evaluation, and the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) is responsible for monitoring and responding to module and programme evaluations. The TEIMC monitors the quality and standards of teaching and learning on taught programmes. The student body engages with academic staff in programme monitoring and review processes through formal feedback mechanisms and through participation in the academic committees.

2.62 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing relevant documentation including policy and process documents, annual reports and minutes of formal meetings and also met university representatives, College staff and students.

2.63 Issues identified through annual monitoring and other ongoing processes are systematically considered by the QASG and included in the detailed quality assurance action plan, together with timescales, responsibilities and methods of evaluating the effectiveness of the actions. Progress is reviewed diligently and updated at regular intervals by the QASG, which also feeds information to other committees as required. Students complete module evaluations and an end-of-year evaluation and responses are provided to students in a systematic manner. TLC is effective in monitoring and responding to module and programme evaluations and the TEIMC maintains comprehensive oversight of the taught provision. As noted in section B7, reports from external examiners are used effectively to inform annual programme reviews for taught programmes. In addition, wider external viewpoints are gained through the TEI Forum Continuing Implementation Group, which includes representatives from the Church of England as the key stakeholder.

2.64 Annual monitoring reports for taught programmes are highly detailed and evaluative and draw on feedback from students, teaching staff, senior staff and deliberative committees. Production of the Annual Programme Review (APR) for the University of Bristol is a well-established process using a prescribed form provided by the University and to cover both taught and research provision. Durham University requires a two-part Annual Self Evaluation (ASE) which feeds into the Bishop's Inspection process now referred to as the Periodic External Review. The ASE for 2014-15 was the first in this format and due to the short timescales set by the University, involvement of staff and committees was more limited than envisaged. Formal minutes of the Joint Faculty are insufficiently detailed to record formal approval of the ASE fully prior to submission (see recommendation in section B1). Subsequent negotiations have resulted in a longer timeframe for submission to ensure wider involvement of all stakeholders in compiling the next ASE. Formal responses to annual monitoring reports have not been received from the universities although both institutions indicate that a greater level of communication will follow submission of future reports to provide feedback and assist with sharing good practice. The annual data return shows extremely high retention and pass rates for all courses.

2.65 The College operates an effective process to protect the academic interests of students when admissions to specific courses are closed, such as the case with University of Bristol programmes which closed to new students from September 2014. During 2014-15, TC-BBC Ltd managed the process of 'teaching out' programmes validated by the University of Bristol, and all students registered with the College have completed their intended programme. A number of students who were originally enrolled on University of Bristol programmes have transferred to Durham University courses and the most recent external examiner report praises the work of staff and the effective internal procedures in ensuring a smooth transition and minimising disruption for students. A number of postgraduate research students who are not on taught courses will remain with University of Bristol until completion of their programme in 2020, as agreed with the University.

2.66 The colleges are represented effectively by a member of Joint Faculty Board in the biannual TEI Forum run by Durham University, which provides the opportunity for those delivering common awards to share good practice, feed back on programme performance overall and discuss issues of concern. Representatives of the University and the Ministry Division of the Church of England are members of the Forum, as are student representatives. Reports on this are provided to TEIMC for information and response.

2.67 The validation agreement with the University of Aberdeen specifies in detail the requirement for regular monitoring of student progress on postgraduate research programmes using progress forms and the production of an annual monitoring report. The first annual report is due to be considered at the Partnership Board in October 2016, which is a Board specified and chaired by the University with two designated staff representatives from TC-BBC Ltd. Prior to the review visit, the Partnership Board did not appear in the colleges' joint academic committee structure, which identified Academic Board as having oversight of University of Aberdeen and University of Bristol postgraduate research programmes. However, the review team was informed that Academic Board has no responsibility for postgraduate research provision for either university. In both cases, the reporting responsibility of the Director of Postgraduate Research is direct to the universities with no formal accountability or reporting requirements to the College beyond ad hoc verbal reports to Joint Faculty Board meetings. It was indicated that, in future, the Joint Faculty Board would consider the annual monitoring report prior to submission to the University Partnership Board, although no such internal oversight arrangement is planned for the remaining University of Bristol provision. Furthermore, there is no formally defined mechanism for the College to consider and evaluate the collective research student experience and quality of learning opportunities in order to enact changes to the student experience at the College. The review team therefore identified a current lack of formalised, internal structures for the systematic monitoring and strategic oversight of postgraduate research programmes at College level. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College develops, implements and formalises a clear reporting structure and annual monitoring process to ensure internal strategic oversight of all postgraduate research programmes.

2.68 The team considers that, while the College operates effective, regular and systematic processes for the monitoring and review of taught programmes, there is insufficient formal internal oversight of the arrangements for postgraduate research programmes to ensure effective monitoring of the quality of student learning opportunities. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met but the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.69 The degree-awarding bodies retain responsibility for academic appeals although student complaints is a shared responsibility with the respective universities. TC-BBC Ltd operate a joint Student Complaints Policy and Procedure for students on Durham Common Awards which is set out in the Student Handbook. The policy covers academic appeals formally addressed to the University, and complaints, which are managed by the College with an emphasis on initial informal processes. Arrangements for students on University of Bristol taught awards are also outlined in the Student Handbook. Complaints and appeals procedures for postgraduate research students are outlined in the University of Aberdeen Academic Quality Handbook and University of Bristol student rules and regulations. Students wishing to raise an academic appeal are required to apply to the relevant university and would be supported in this process by the Academic Registrar.

2.70 The review team tested the approach by considering information on complaints and appeals in policies, procedures and students' handbooks and by discussing the process with staff and students.

2.71 The joint Student Complaints Policy and Procedure clearly differentiates between academic appeals to be managed by the universities and other complaints. The latter are dealt with by the College with which the complainant is registered, although the policy stresses the importance of informal resolution where possible. There have been no formal complaints or appeals in recent years.

2.72 Students whom the team met are aware of the processes in place relating to both academic appeals and complaints. Students are informed about these policies through handbooks, during induction and through documents placed on the VLE for future reference. Students confirmed that their academic tutors or research supervisors act as the main point of informal feedback and, as outlined in section B5, the level of partnership between students and staff provides effective routes for addressing such feedback. Students who had raised issues through the informal routes noted the professional and well addressed process.

2.73 The review team considers that the arrangements for managing appeals and complaints are appropriate and understood by students and staff. The College provides a range of opportunities for raising feedback informally and through formal channels, where required. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.74 As outlined above, TC-BBC Ltd acts as the Theological Education Institution (TEI) in contracting with Durham University on the validation and delivery of the common awards framework. The joint company is also used as the vehicle for contracting with the University of Aberdeen for the delivery of postgraduate research degrees. Ongoing undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are delivered jointly by the two colleges, and the College therefore shares responsibilities for student learning with its counterpart in the joint company. The responsibilities undertaken by each college for the delivery and management of joint programmes is defined, and oversight exercised through the joint committees and through membership on each other's Board of Trustees.

2.75 Other arrangements for delivering learning opportunities arise through the partnerships established for the support of student placement opportunities. Trinity College's Strategic Overview 2016 cites as its first objective the expansion of new context-based training through increased recruitment and by working in partnership with Bristol Baptist College and southwest dioceses. The College currently delivers ministerial training to its ordinands through context-based training placements, and establishes practical and mutually satisfying relationships with a range of institutions and dioceses to provide placement learning opportunities to students.

2.76 The review team explored the approach through a review of strategic and operational documentation relating to ministerial, community and church placements, including handbooks, module specifications and meeting minutes. The team also met staff involved in managing and supporting placements, external placement supervisors and students with a range of placement experiences.

2.77 The College has a strategic approach to providing a variety of practical placements through its use of contextual placement training. This involves placing students in a church context for the full two or three years of their studies, requiring regular, weekly engagement with the community and parish activities. Such placements provide a context for developing pastoral, preaching, mission-focused and liturgical skills. This approach is separate from the Church of England's introduction of 'context-based learning', which provides a day release model for students who are otherwise permanently based in a practice setting, although the College is trialling context-based learning with one non-ordinand student this academic year. In addition to contextual placements, both ordinands and non-ordinands undertake short summer placements to broaden their experience. The College encourages students to use short placements to experience new and alternative contexts to challenge and provoke self-reflection. The breadth and depth of contextual-based placements enhances the student learning experience, provides relevant missional interaction with the community and is recognised elsewhere in this report as good practice (see section B4).

2.78 The College provides placement support to students through the use of academic staff, placement supervisors based in the placement setting and peer support groups. This is complemented by placement guides and resources for students and placement supervisors. Students keep a record of their placement activities/involvement in ministerial logs, which are submitted to the Director of Pastoral Studies. Students are asked to evaluate their

placement experience formally using the practical training student evaluation form and the practical training student preaching form. Students discuss their individual placement experiences with the Director of Pastoral Studies.

2.79 Mutually rewarding relationships have been established by the College with its placement parishes for the delivery and support of context-based training. Each student requires a placement supervisor to act as the point of context within the placement setting. Placement supervisors whom the team met commented on the high standard of the guidance handbooks prepared for placement supervisors and students. Placement supervisors are provided with a significant programme of training which is delivered in partnership with other providers in the region. Training takes place once or twice a year, and there is a review meeting at the end of the academic year. Placement supervisors reported that meetings with college tutors and students took place eight to nine times a year to discuss student progress, theological training and student employability, and to reflect on ideas and the parish experience. These meetings are deemed helpful in identifying any issues, agreeing objectives and ensuring that students are able to meet the Church of England Ministry criteria for ordinands. Placement supervisors also reported that students provide a valuable role within their placements in supporting the work of the parish and clergy. There are robust relationships between the College and placement settings in managing and supporting individual student learning needs, and this is **good practice**.

2.80 The review team considers that the College has sound processes for managing relationships with partners that provide learning opportunities and that these are implemented soundly and effectively. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the 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

2.81 Postgraduate research degree provision is in a period of transition between two awarding bodies. Until September 2015, research students were enrolled on a programme of study validated by the University of Bristol, although this arrangement is discontinuing. From September 2015, new applicants have been enrolled on programmes validated by the University of Aberdeen under a new partnership agreement established in August 2015. Both universities have a Code of Practice containing regulations that govern the operation of the programmes. All university policies and procedures are made available to staff and students through the respective university website with links from the College VLE. The management of research degrees is carried out by the Trinity College Director of Postgraduate Research and Trinity College Postgraduate Research Administrator on behalf of both colleges.

2.82 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach through the analysis of relevant documentation, including codes of practice and awarding body regulations. The team also held meetings with staff involved in the management, administration and supervision of research programmes and met current research students.

2.83 All research supervisors are approved by the University of Aberdeen annually, based on submission of a CV and information regarding the progress of current students. There is no formal training provided for the role of supervisor although informal conversations with the Director of Postgraduate Research provide an opportunity to discuss responsibilities and emerging issues. Staff new to supervision act as second supervisors in the first instance, which allows for mentoring by experienced supervisors. In addition to informal meetings, supervisors meet every year to discuss the supervision process and students are also required to record feedback on the supervision received through the supervisor meeting reports. Formal induction of supervisors to the new University of Aberdeen research programmes has not yet taken place although is planned for June 2016. The review team therefore **affirms** the steps being taken to provide a formal induction for supervisors to the new policies and procedures.

2.84 As outlined in section B2, student applications are considered by the joint Research Applications Committee (RAC), which includes experienced supervisors from across colleges. Decisions on applicants are forwarded to the University of Aberdeen. In addition to considering suitability of candidates, RAC also considers proposals for primary supervisor arrangements and ensures sufficient workload capacity. Arrangements for the allocation and approval of secondary supervisors, required by the University of Aberdeen and more recently by the University of Bristol, are in progress. The review team was informed that due to the short period between validation and enrolment, second supervisors would be allocated during the first year rather than on enrolment, although there is limited awareness or evidence of progress to date. Students and staff confirmed that an additional named supervisor has been allocated at the University of Aberdeen but noted that this individual is not intended to have any active role in supervision. Furthermore, the internal process for the agreement and appointment of second supervisors prior to submission to the University does not appear to be formalised or clearly defined in College procedures. The review team

therefore **recommends** that the College clarifies and formalises the process for the internal selection, approval and ongoing support of first and second supervisors.

2.85 As a result of the short period between University of Aberdeen approval and the programme start date, the induction arrangements for research students in September were not as in-depth as the College would have wished. Although no formal induction was organised, students were provided with an appropriate information pack, supplemented by information from their supervisor, and an extended induction will be provided for these students at the next summer conference. A new induction process is being designed for September 2016 to incorporate greater use of technology, to enable remote students to have similar access to information and materials.

2.86 Students based at the College have access to an appropriate research environment: working closely alongside peers and research-active staff, attending weekly research groups between staff and students to discuss current research developments and being encouraged to attend and present at conferences. A well-received annual summer conference is also arranged providing numerous opportunities for research student engagement. In addition, British Theological Society meetings are held at Trinity College and are open to research students studying at both colleges. Students can also take advantage of all development offerings provided by the University of Aberdeen.

2.87 Some students study remotely, including a number of students who are based overseas, and are therefore unable to benefit to the same extent from the research environment provided to those studying on campus. The application process enquires into a student's access to local resources and students must be able to demonstrate that sufficient facilities are available to complete their research. Conditions to this effect may be specified in the offer letter. Supervision meetings are organised via video links and students visit the College a couple of times per year, including the annual conference. Increased use of technology is currently being investigated to enable greater remote access to College resources. While staff are aware of the need to ensure students have an appropriate research environment, details for each student on the opportunities and support available locally and at the College are not currently held or maintained centrally. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College ensures that access to an appropriate research environment is identified, recorded and systematically monitored for students studying remotely.

2.88 The College abides by the awarding body regulations for progress monitoring and completes forms on individual student progression at regular intervals. In addition, TC-BBC Ltd mandates an upgrade viva in the first year of study, whereby students submit work to be assessed by an internal and external examiner. This process was deemed challenging but necessary by the students whom the team met.

2.89 As outlined in section B8 above, annual monitoring of University of Aberdeen programmes will occur at the end of the first year of delivery. Student feedback is routinely collected from all students to inform the annual monitoring reports required by the validating universities although no plans are in place for formally recording and acting on this within the existing committee structure. Issues raised by a student or supervisor are reported by the Director of Postgraduate Research directly to the respective universities, which limits internal strategic and operational oversight of the quality of student learning opportunities and the scope for enhancing the postgraduate research experience at the College (see recommendation in section B8).

2.90 Overall, the review team considers that the experience of postgraduate research students is sound. However, the review team considers that insufficient priority is given to internal monitoring and assuring the quality of student learning opportunities on

postgraduate research programmes and that there are weaknesses in the operation of the governance structures as they pertain to postgraduate research provision. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is not met and the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Not met

Level of risk: Moderate

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.91 In determining its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this area are met and low risk, with the exception of Expectations B8 and B11. The review team considers that Expectation B8 is met but that there is a moderate risk to student learning opportunities, and that Expectation B11 is not met and the risk to student learning opportunities is moderate. Identified risks in these areas are generally confined to a specific part of the overall provision.

2.92 The arrangements for ensuring the quality of student learning opportunities on taught programmes are generally sound. The review team notes a number of features of good practice with regards to the embedded, holistic and individualised support available to students at application and throughout their studies and the highly effective use of external input to programme delivery and management of placement learning. Additionally, the strong approach to staff scholarship impacts positively on the student experience and the level of partnership between staff and students is effective in enhancing learning opportunities.

2.93 While the arrangements for overseeing taught provision are well established and effective, arrangements for the management and oversight of postgraduate research degrees are less robust. In particular, there are weaknesses in the internal reporting structures and insufficient emphasis placed on exercising central oversight of the quality of learning opportunities provided to postgraduate research students, particularly at a time of institutional change. In addition to this, the review team also recommends changes to the recording of formal meetings and strengthening aspects of the peer observation process for teaching staff.

2.94 Overall, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities provided by 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 College provides information to prospective students and other stakeholders mainly through its website and social media pages. Although much of the information is common to both colleges, especially regarding the programmes that are delivered jointly, the College maintains its own web presence and produces separate information regarding community life at the College. Responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of information provided on the public website is that of the Communications and Publicity Officer, who works in consultation with other members of staff, and in liaison with the validating universities.

3.2 Information for current students regarding their programmes is mainly provided through the VLE, with links to awarding body websites where appropriate. A single VLE is provided for students which is used as a joint resource by both colleges, although content of the VLE is managed by the Academic Registrar.

3.3 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing a range of materials made available by the College and by meeting key staff involved in the production of information. The review team also spoke to students regarding the information received prior to and during their studies.

3.4 As the coordinator of Common Awards programmes, the College provides comprehensive information about courses, pathway options, learning facilities, and disability support and study skills through a newly designed website. Students whom the team met confirmed that the information on the website is accurate, relevant and supported their decision-making at application and during their studies. Information is sent to all new students in the summer before the start of the programme. The information pack includes relevant information about the community as well as the academic programme and guidance for optional reading.

3.5 Students are able to access programme information, handbooks, module delivery information, module resources and student-focused College and university policies and procedures on the joint VLE, and they commented on the ease of use and accessibility of information. Minutes of meetings, external examiner reports and detailed specifications are made available to students on the VLE. Student use of the programme specifications is supported by individual programme student handbooks available online. The joint VLE is currently being upgraded for September 2016 and students have trialled new test module uploads. Students have access to their University portals, and the initial access issues experienced for Durham Common Awards students are now being resolved. While the VLE provides a highly effective tool for communicating with taught students, research degree students reported less value in the VLE and tended to access information required for their studies through the awarding body website and through their supervisors.

3.6 The use of the VLE for the delivery of information is helpfully complemented through other methods, including regular lunchtime notices, email updates and close

communication between staff and student groups. The College uses a variety of social media channels and outlines responsibilities in the student code of conduct, although it is considering developing further guidance for staff and students in this area.

3.7 Upon completion of their studies, students are issued with a transcript by the validating university outlining final module marks and programme result. A certificate is provided separately by the validating university. Information required by the Higher Education Funding Council for England relating to student numbers, withdrawals and completions is submitted annually. Where this is related to programmes delivered jointly, Trinity College coordinates this process.

3.8 Overall, the review team considers that the College produces information for a range of audiences and that due care is taken to ensure that this is fit for purpose, accurate and trustworthy. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9 In determining its judgement on the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team considers that the expectation in this area is met and that the risk to student learning opportunities is low.

3.10 The College produces a variety of information in different forms and for different audiences which are generally sound and trustworthy. The College makes good use of its website and internal virtual learning environment to convey information about its taught programmes, although it relies more on the validating bodies' materials in the case of postgraduate research programmes. Clear responsibilities are established for the maintenance and review of information.

3.11 Overall, the review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities provided 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 College strategic plan outlines further development of the institution, covering improvement of the academic provision as well as infrastructure. Following the creation of the joint company, there has been a desire for greater union between the two institutions which is reflected in the respective strategic plans. The next step in this process is the practical consideration of locating both institutions on one site. The joint academic management and quality assurance processes, refined over a number of years, involve all stakeholders and provide the structure through which to drive enhancement of learning opportunities both jointly and at each individual college.

4.2 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach to enhancement by analysing relevant documentation including strategic documents, minutes of meetings and pro formas. The review team also discussed the approach with staff and students during the visit.

4.3 Opportunities for enhancement are outlined in a detailed three-year strategic plan prepared for consideration by the Board of Trustees which includes proposals for closer academic and corporate union with Bristol Baptist College, building on the progress made so far with the successful validation of programmes by Durham University and the University of Aberdeen. In particular, there is a clear focus on developing students' leadership skills as well as satisfying the Church of England Ministry Division's desired emphasis on practical learning through the growth of contextual and context-based training.

4.4 The College has developed an underpinning strategy to deliver a vision of the lifecycle of learning, covering a student's time before, during and after college. While attending college, this covers character formation, church-based training and leadership growth as well as structured academic learning. The College achieves this through the inclusion within the curriculum of activities that are not specifically academic or assessed, including attendance by students at college chapel and specific requirements of community life. Student feedback indicates that these areas are viewed as both teaching and learning environments for their future ministry.

4.5 The academic committee structure within TC-BBC Ltd works effectively to improve the quality of student learning opportunities through the operation of the Quality Assurance Steering Group (QASG), which has produced a detailed action plan based on the annual monitoring report. This is regularly reviewed and evaluated by the committee through a defined process to ensure that initiatives are addressed in a timely and effective manner. Of particular note are plans to increase student participation through the use of online surveys, to increase the sharing of good teaching and learning practices through the VLE, to make educational enhancement a standing item in the termly meetings between senior management and the student executive committees, and to take effective action to address students' suggestions to improve their learning experience. The academic committee framework has been further strengthened by the introduction of the Curriculum Development Group (CDG) in 2015 to relieve pressure on the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC).

4.6 The institution has taken great care to minimise the impact on student learning during the transitional change in awarding body from the University of Bristol to Durham University. This has been achieved in a highly effective manner, evidenced by the positive comments in the external examiner's report, which also praised the effective and robust internal processes that caught potential problems at an early stage.

4.7 Thorough use is made of student feedback to improve and enhance the provision. The 'You said We did' document, produced in response to student feedback, demonstrates the effective use of information to enhance learning opportunities. Online surveys for every module encourage student comments and suggestions, which are carefully considered by tutors and, where relevant, taken forward to the appropriate formal meeting. A strong system of student representation within the academic infrastructure, in addition to the elected student executive committees' regular interaction with staff at all levels, has a positive impact on learning opportunities. For example, the School of Leadership (see below) was devised following student suggestions that improving leadership qualities would provide added value for learners. Students speak highly of the effective academic improvements that the College regularly makes, which enhance their learning.

4.8 The College has a strong approach to scholarship, especially during sabbaticals, as a means of improving faculty knowledge and the quality of teaching. The use of regular additional teaching and learning workshops as a means of improving teaching quality further strengthens the focus on continuing development.

4.9 Students undertake contextual placements during their programme to provide them with the opportunity of gaining parish experiences and developing communication and leadership skills. They compile a portfolio, which is discussed with their placement supervisor and tutor and which forms an assessed component of the course. In line with its defined strategy, the College undertook an extensive review of the practical training aspects of the provision by a staff-student working group. As a result, the College has revised its system of regular placements to provide students with a range of contextual training opportunities that enhance their learning. A thorough, well designed system of recording and discussing placement experiences facilitates high levels of critical, effective reflection, which shape students' understanding and enables them to relate classroom theory to their practice. The development, oversight and review of contextual training placements and subsequent high level of reflection grounds theory in student practice and is **good practice**.

4.10 In order to ensure that graduating students have the ministerial skills necessary to lead their church communities, the Church of England and the Baptist Union of Great Britain have identified additional personal attributes such as management, group and collaborative working, adaptability and flexibility. Following student feedback and input from faculty and denominational stakeholders, the College has devised and launched the School of Leadership as part of its strategic development in character formation and to support students in developing these personal attributes. This has been resourced in partnership with the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS), an external charity that supports churches and their leaders. Currently in its first year, the two-year programme offers both ordinands and independent students the opportunity to choose six out of twelve modules focusing on different aspects of leadership. Although it is not currently part of the validated or assessed programme, students are able to enhance their learning through a customised course, which they indicate is of a very high standard. This programme is being actively overseen at senior level to evaluate impact and make further changes. The strategic approach to the development of leadership skills through the School of Leadership is **good practice**.

4.11 There are robust processes in operation where information generated by stakeholders is considered at College level and used to inform strategic decisions, resulting in actions with the potential to improve learning opportunities for students. The reviews team considers that the College takes deliberate, well considered steps to improve the quality of student learning opportunities. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.12 In determining its judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the College, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The review team considered that the Expectation in this area is met and that the risk to student learning opportunities is low.

4.13 The approach to enhancement stems from strategic documentation and is supported by an effective internal joint committee structure, which is periodically reviewed and adapted to meet emerging needs. Student engagement in enhancement is embedded through effective student representation structures and through good use of informal and formal feedback. Annual monitoring data for taught programmes is systematically used to develop and track areas for enhancement and extensive use of external stakeholders is sought in shaping developments such as in placement format and support. Enhancement activity is evidence based, planned and evaluated effectively as in the case of the development of the School of Leadership which the review team considers to be good practice.

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: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The majority of students on Trinity College programmes are sponsored for eventual deployment as ordained ministers of the Church of England, although a minority of students study theological programmes for academic and professional reasons and do not intend to become ordinands on graduation. For prospective ordinands, the academic course forms one key aspect of their initial training programme and these students complete a programme of personal and spiritual formation required by the Church of England. Students who complete their programme of personal and spiritual formation and gain their academic qualification are guaranteed to serve in a Church of England post following ordination.

5.2 The College aims to enhance students' preparation for parish ministry further through their participation in a non-assessed programme of professional induction. The professional programme provides the opportunity for students to consider a more hands-on approach to aspects of parish life from the perspective of an ordained minister. The aim of the programme is to give a realistic, non-idealised view of both the positives and negatives of serving as an ordained minister. The programme makes students aware of current best practice in handling specific pastoral and parish issues. Some of the sessions include guest speakers, for example input from an expert in clergy taxation. Students on the programme also have the opportunity to visit an area of multiple urban deprivation, and an Anglo-Catholic parish. During the summer term, the College holds a Transitions to Parochial Ministry (Leaving Ordinands Programme) week for graduating students. College and guest speakers discuss with students the practical issues and spiritual transitions they face as they cease to be students and enter their ministerial careers in the Church of England.

5.3 To further enhance student employability, the professional induction programme aims to ensure that students have a knowledge and understanding of the traditions of the Church of England. During their programme of study at the College, students, in consultation with College tutors, select a contextual placement training parish in order to enhance their pastoral and ministerial knowledge and skills. For non-residential students the College will consult with the students' local diocese on a suitable placement in order to enhance future employment opportunities. Ordinands are also required to undertake a block summer placement which provides the opportunity for them to experience a parish environment with which they are unfamiliar.

5.4 In order to meet the Church of England's growing emphasis on the importance of leadership skills in ordained ministry, Trinity College has worked with the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS) to offer students a place on the School of Leadership programme. Although this programme is non-accredited, student feedback is enthusiastic and highly positive. Successful completion of this programme provides students with enhanced skills to be collaborative leaders in their future parishes.

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 22-25 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#)

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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