



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of UK College of Business and Computing

December 2018

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the UK College of Business and Computing. The review took place from 10 to 12 December 2018 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Mark Atlay
- Professor Paul Brunt
- Ms Karen Chetwynd
- Ms Sophie Elliot (student reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/higher-education-review.

Key findings

Judgements

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

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

Good practice

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

- The considered, integrated and highly effective use made of technology to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4)

Recommendations

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

By July 2019:

- strengthen the mechanisms for the representation of students on committees to improve the continuity and effectiveness of their collective participation (Expectation B5)
- ensure that external examiners comments and recommendations are fully considered and addressed through the annual monitoring process (Expectation B7).

By December 2019:

- develop and implement a system for the regular evaluation of the effectiveness of academic governance structures (Expectation A2.1).

About the provider

The UK College of Business and Computing Ltd (UKCBC) is an independent higher education provider which was established in 2001. UKCBC's vision is to provide quality-based, cost effective learning opportunities to all students including non-traditional, widening participation communities and mature learners.

UKCBC currently offers higher education provision from three awarding partners: four level 5 Higher National qualifications from Pearson; the level 4 Professional Diploma in Accounting from the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT); three level 6 top-up programmes, and one degree programme with integrated foundation year from Bath Spa University (BSU). The College is approved by Gateway Qualifications to offer level 4 and 5 qualifications but none are currently offered.

In 2014, UKCBC entered into a sub-contracted partnership to deliver AAT programmes, with Redbridge College. Owing to the success of the partnership this was extended to the delivery of Pearson programmes from 2015. Redbridge College was re-named New City College (NCC) in 2017 following a merger with two other colleges. NCC sub-contracts UKCBC to teach HND students and register them with Pearson. Students are registered students of NCC. In 2017 UKCBC entered into a partnership with Bath Spa University for the delivery of top-up and degree qualifications.

The College has 2,150 students enrolled on higher education programmes; 611 students were registered with the College and 1,539 with NCC. Students are predominantly adult mature students from a diverse socio-cultural background. All students on Pearson and BSU programmes are home students and eligible for fee and maintenance loans. Students on AAT programmes are self-funded, or employer-sponsored.

UKCBC was subject to a QAA Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) in May 2017 which concluded that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of awarding organisations, the quality of student learning opportunities, the quality of the information about learning opportunities and the enhancement of student learning opportunities met UK expectations. Five recommendations were made. The subsequent annual monitoring visit in June 2018 concluded that the provider is making progress in implementing the action plan following its latest full review but further improvement was required. Issues identified mainly related to admissions, information and academic appeals and complaints. The College produced another action plan following the monitoring visit. The review team considered the progress made by UKCBC in implementing the recommendations and actions from both events and concludes that they have been satisfactorily addressed.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The awarding partners have the responsibility for ensuring that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)*, qualification characteristics, credit frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements are appropriately considered. In order to assist, the College embeds the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) in its policies and processes and ensures that staff have a good understanding of its application. Oversight of quality and standards including ensuring compliance with the Quality Code is the responsibility of the College's Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC).

1.2 Programmes are delivered at levels 4, 5 and 6. The BSU provision was designed and developed by the University. The HNDs were developed by Pearson with reference to Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements and those of the Quality Code. The College designs the assessment for Pearson programmes in line with Pearson requirements, while assessment for BSU and AAT provision are the responsibility of the awarding partners. The activities of the awarding partners combined with the policies and

procedures of the College would allow Expectation A1 to be met.

1.3 The review team tested the College's approach by considering a wide range of documentation, including the agreement with BSU, responsibility checklists, programme specifications, terms of reference of key committees and their minutes. It also met with senior staff including representatives of the governing body and the awarding body, teaching and support staff, and students.

1.4 Learning outcomes reflect the Subject Benchmark Statements and the standards expected of awards and are included in programme documents so that they provide key reference points for teaching staff and students. College staff are aware of the standards of the awards delivered on behalf of the awarding partners and the College's responsibilities to ensure that programmes are delivered to reflect these standards.

1.5 Recent BSU programme approval reports demonstrate that the FHEQ and relevant subject benchmarks were appropriately considered. Staff confirmed that, as part of the course design and approval process, they had been involved in discussions with staff at the University. Although the review team were informed that the programme approval report had been considered by ASQC the review team could not see evidence of this reflected in the agenda or minutes of meetings. This matter is discussed further under Expectation A2.1.

1.6 The awarding partners have ultimate responsibility for the setting of academic standards and College staff are clear about their responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards through the application of the FHEQ, qualification descriptors, credit requirements and Subject Benchmark Statements. The review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7 The College is responsible for delivering programmes under the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding partners as specified in the partners' quality manuals, approval reports and the relevant legal agreements. Programme handbooks provide guidance on regulatory information for students. Some students on AAT and Pearson provision are covered by an agreement with New City College (NCC). An appendix to the agreement lists the relevant responsibilities of UKCBC and NCC. The legal agreement, drawn up by NCC, relates to the funding of students and does not directly relate to matters affecting the relationship between the College and its awarding partner or in relation to the College's associated policies and procedures. The agreement does permit NCC to maintain a level of oversight to assure itself that UKCBC is providing an adequate learning experience to its students through a range of interactions including the scrutiny of relevant policies and procedures, the sharing of data and cross-membership on committees.

1.8 The ASQC has a specific remit to oversee academic standards and quality processes across campuses and programmes. Programme Management and Standardisation Committees for each programme, the Admissions Committee, Campus Committees, Student Experience Committees and Programme Standardisation and Assessment Committees report to ASQC. In turn, ASQC reports to the College Management Committee and the Board of Governors. The academic frameworks and policies of the partners combined with the structures, policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.9 The review team tested the College's approach to ensuring the implementation of the academic regulations of the awarding partners through consideration of a wide range of documentation including programme handbooks, agreements, responsibility checklists, external reports, policies and procedures and the minutes of committees. It also met with senior staff including representatives of the governing body and the awarding body, teaching and support staff, and students.

1.10 Programme specifications and handbooks make reference to the appropriate academic frameworks and regulations under which each programme operates. Relevant College policies and procedures are shared via the virtual learning environment (VLE). For AAT provision, the relevant regulations are contained in the AAT Quality Manual. In meetings staff and students confirmed that they were clear about the academic frameworks under which their programmes operate. External examiners report that the regulations are applied appropriately as does the latest Pearson Annual Management Review report.

1.11 From a review of the agreement with NCC and discussions with College staff and students, the review team were satisfied that, although the checklist set out in appendix 2 to the agreement could be clearer, the responsibilities of both parties in relation to students covered under the arrangement were well-understood.

1.12 The ASQC has a central role in the College's academic governance arrangements. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Quality Enhancement & Development and

involves Programme Leaders for all programmes and student representatives. Its remit is wide-ranging and includes matters relating to programme approval, monitoring and review, external examining, teaching and learning, and the review and approval of policies and procedures. Background papers are placed in a shared folder for members to view. From a review of committee papers, the review team could see a range of quality matters being considered by the ASQC but it was not clear that committee members had full access to the reports and documents referred to in its terms of reference. Committee members are routinely referred to other papers including the minutes of various committee meetings and action plans, student feedback and analysis, student performance, retention, attendance and progression analysis and the master register for action plans, but not to other items such as programme approval reports (see Expectation A1) or external examiners' reports (see recommendation Expectation B7). There is no continuity of student representation on the committee and students were often asked to leave after directly student-related matters had been discussed (see recommendation Expectation B5). ASQC reports to the Board of Governors through its minutes but there is currently no annual report on quality and standards issues. The review team also noted that there was no mechanism for regularly reviewing the effectiveness of committees although a governance review focussing on the Board of Governors was currently underway. The team, therefore, **recommends** that the College develops and implements a system for the regular evaluation of the effectiveness of its academic governance structures.

1.13 Although the College's governance arrangements could be further strengthened, it has appropriate procedures in place to effectively adhere to the awarding partners' frameworks and regulations for the award of academic credit and qualifications. The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.14 The responsibility for the production and maintenance of definitive programme records lies with the awarding partners. The College is provided with the definitive record of each programme in the form of a programme specification developed by each of the awarding partners. Relevant information from them is published by the College on the VLE and within programme handbooks. For BSU programmes, the programme specifications are prepared by the awarding body for programme approval events and are subsequently reviewed through periodic and annual monitoring processes. The responsibility for record keeping is shared between the College and the awarding body. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.15 The review team tested the College's approach to the provision of programme specifications through the consideration of documents including programme specifications, student handbooks and the VLE. The team also met with senior and teaching staff, and students.

1.16 Programme specifications are comprehensive and contain the programme learning outcomes as well as relevant programme operation and assessment information. Programme specifications are used by staff in the delivery of the provision. The review team heard that programme specifications are used in curriculum design, where relevant, and the creation of assignment briefs. The programme handbooks replicate relevant information from the programme specifications for students and are easily available through the College's VLE. Students were complimentary about the comprehensive nature of programme information in their handbooks.

1.17 Overall, the College meets its responsibilities for this Expectation and has clear arrangements in place for the provision of definitive programme information. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.18 BSU, Pearson and AAT are responsible for the design and approval of programmes delivered at the College. They are responsible for ensuring that academic standards for their programmes are set at the correct level to meet threshold standards, align with the FHEQ and are in accordance with their academic frameworks and regulations. The College has a Programme Design and Approval Policy which sets out the principles for the design, development and approval of new programmes. Within the College, ultimate responsibility for programme approval and modifications to existing programmes rests with ASQC. For Pearson programmes the College follows Pearson's rules of combination for the selection of modules and for AAT provision the College maintains the standards prescribed for a computer-based test centre. BSU programme teams are expected to adhere to the respective quality assurance requirements for programme approval and subsequent changes to the provision. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.19 The review team tested the Expectation through the consideration of programme approval and modification policies, documentation and minutes of relevant committees. The team also met with senior and academic staff.

1.20 The College adheres to the principles of programme approval and modification as outlined in its Programme Design and Approval Policy. The programme approval report for the franchised BSU provision confirmed setting of appropriate academic standards and the College's interaction with the University in preparation for the approval. The College's senior staff were able to communicate the College's work with the awarding body at institutional level. At programme level there was evidence of regular interaction and operational cooperation between the College and the University. There have been no recent modifications to Pearson programmes. The College has developed constructive relationships with Pearson external examiners and AAT.

1.21 The College fully engages with the awarding partners' requirements for programme approval and adheres to its own policy for the design and approval of programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

1.22 The awarding partners are responsible for ensuring that the College's qualifications are based on students' achievement of learning outcomes, and are of the appropriate standard. Further, the awarding partners ensure the currency and validity of the qualifications.

1.23 The College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, its Assessment, Marking and Feedback Policy and Process, and BSU's Assessment Policy detail how summative assessment ensures the achievement of learning outcomes. Programme and module learning outcomes are determined by the awarding partners, and are reflected in programme specifications, which also detail the assessment criteria. Provision to modify the assessment requirements is in place.

1.24 For BSU programmes, programme teams liaise with the University Link Tutor to agree drafts of examinations and coursework assignments, which are also subject to approval by the external examiner. For Pearson awards, the College sets assessments and is responsible for marking, with all stages overseen by the external examiner. In the case of AAT programmes, the awarding organisation sets and marks assessments. Assessment Boards for Pearson and BSU provision confirm the achievement of relevant learning outcomes and that academic standards have been satisfied. The arrangements in place would allow Expectation A3.2 to be met.

1.25 To test the Expectation the review team considered a range of documentation including policies and procedures relating to assessment, external examiner reports, programme specifications and student handbooks. The team also undertook meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.26 Staff who the review team met showed awareness of the specific assessment requirements of each awarding partner. There is a close level of scrutiny to ensure that the volume of learning delivered by College is consistent with students' achievement of the learning outcomes. The process for the internal verification of assessment briefs is clearly set out in the College's Assessment and Marking Policy and BSU's Assessment Policy, which ensures consistency of approach. External examiner reports are positive in respect of the assessment process with specific comments indicating that assessment briefs are well designed, and indicate confidence in marking of assessments and internal verification of results. Students confirmed that the assessment processes were clear to them.

1.27 The College's assessment policies, processes and procedures meet the requirements of the awarding partners. The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.28 Responsibility for programme monitoring and review in relation to academic standards and ensuring alignment with the UK threshold academic standards rests with the awarding partners. The College undertakes programme reviews through an annual cycle of activity, which is considered at programme and College level and informs the College's Quality Improvement Plan. The College also undergoes annual and periodic monitoring and review under requirements from its awarding partners, in addition to external examiner reporting. The College's arrangements for processes of course monitoring and review and external monitoring by its awarding partners and external examiners enable the College to establish that academic standards have been achieved and maintained. The current systems in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.29 The review team tested the effectiveness of the arrangements and process through the examination of documentation including annual monitoring reports, module evaluations and discussions with staff and students.

1.30 The College has a range of mechanisms for the purposes of programme monitoring. It monitors its Pearson provision through the completion of an annual return and Pearson provides a comprehensive external quality report on the College. The annual return is monitored by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee. Action plans are drawn up to ensure that matters raised in the return are addressed and progress is monitored by the senior management team of the College. For AAT programmes, the College provides an annual self-assessment report, which subsequently follows similar monitoring and scrutiny. BSU programmes require the production of a Partner Annual Report by the University Link Tutor. The report evaluates the relationship, reflects on progress with issues from the previous year and sets out actions for the year ahead. At the time of the review, a full report had yet to be completed for the first time, but an initial review had identified six areas for the College's attention.

1.31 In addition to the awarding partners' requirements the College produces annual course self-evaluation documents, which analyse data relating to student progression, completion and achievement, and responses to external examiner reports. These self-evaluation documents provide a distillation of the external examiner feedback, and the review team noted that in some instances the wording in self-evaluation documents arguably lessened the importance of the issue (see recommendation Expectation B7). CSEDs are discussed in Programme Management and Standardisation Committee meetings, and action plans are drawn up to implement any recommendations and suggestions made.

1.32 At institutional level the College produces an Annual Monitoring and Programme Review report which provides an overview to the senior management team on the outcomes of the module evaluation process. The report captures and analyses data of modules completed and the student achievements within them. Further evaluation of annual reporting occurs within the College's Academic Standards and Quality Committee where the College's internal monitoring is combined with the external reports from the awarding partners, to inform the overall Quality Improvement Plan.

1.33 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.3 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College fulfils its responsibilities with regard to the requirements for annual monitoring and review of its awarding partners.

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

1.34 The College's awarding partners are responsible for the standards of awards including the use of external and independent expertise during programme design, development and approval. External examiners are appointed by the awarding partners to review assignments and provide impartial advice and recommendations to ensure that academic are being achieved. The College's internal processes and procedures support the requirements of its awarding partners. The College uses senior academic expertise within its governing body, which receives minutes from the ASQC. The policies and procedures of the awarding partners supported by the College's internal processes and its use of additional expertise would allow Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.35 The review team examined a range of documentation including course approval and external examiner reports, College policies and the minutes of key committees. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff.

1.36 Staff with whom the review team met are aware of the value of the use of external expertise. Members of the College's governing body have senior university experience and this has helped guide the development of the priorities in the College's Quality Improvement Plan. The College also uses external expertise to advise it on policies and procedures, where required, including reviewing its quality monitoring systems and has established links with the local Chamber of Commerce. Under BSU arrangements, external expertise is utilised in the design and approval of the programmes. External examiners are positive about the major aspects of programme design and confirm that threshold standards are met.

1.37 The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the awarding partners use external input in programme design and monitoring and the College uses appropriate external advice to inform the development of its quality systems.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

1.38 In reaching its judgement about academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All seven Expectations in this judgement area have been met and the level of risk is judged to be low in six of them. One Expectation attracted a recommendation with regard to the regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the College's academic governance structures and the level of risk is judged to be moderate.

1.39 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The College operates under an established delivery arrangement with Pearson and AAT and a more recent franchise relationship with BSU. Overall responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes delivered at the College rests with its awarding partners. The College's responsibilities for this Expectation are therefore limited.

The College's Programme Design and Development Policy sets out its input into programme design, development and approval for the various types of programmes and the processes to be followed for the approval of changes to existing programmes, where the College has the authority to make them. Oversight of the redevelopment of programmes process rests with the relevant Programme Management and Standardisation Committee in the first instance, with final proposals submitted to ASQC for approval. For the context of this provision the arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.2 In order to test the effectiveness of the College's approach to programme design, development and approval the review team considered documents such as responsibility checklists, College policies and the minutes of relevant committees. The team also met with senior, academic and professional support staff and students.

2.3 Staff are aware of the staged process to be followed where redevelopment of a programme is deemed necessary. Any changes to programmes will be based on research and feedback from staff and students, and a range of issues such as fit with the current regulatory frameworks and resource implications would be considered. The review team heard that this process was not currently in operation due to the restrictions afforded by the portfolio of programmes offered through Pearson and ATT. AAT programmes only comprise of mandatory modules and follow a defined teaching schedule leading to the regulated qualification. The College is not permitted to make any amendments to suit local requirements. For Pearson awards staff were able to discuss programme design and development with regard to unit selection. The franchised BSU provision is currently in the initial stages of delivery and no proposals for modification were evident. Staff were aware of the need for changes to be approved by the awarding body and were able to discuss channels for communicating new programme design initiatives.

2.4 Staff were less aware of opportunities to formally identify the need for change or expectations for the development of new programmes through consultation with external advisors; stakeholders or student groups. The College's Programme Design and Development Policy indicates that, when in operation, these considerations are to be fully debated within the PMSC and afterwards the AQSC, noting communication of changes for students as a priority.

2.5 Overall, the College has appropriate mechanisms in place to fulfil its limited responsibilities for the design, development and approval of programmes including changes to existing provision. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, and the level of associated 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

2.6 The College is responsible for the admission and enrolment of students to the programmes from Pearson and AAT. For BSU programmes the University is ultimately responsible for admissions decisions but students apply to the College and the College has responsibility for their enrolment. The College has an Admissions Policy and Procedures, which sets out the process and entry requirements for admissions to programmes from the awarding partners including admissions of students under the agreement with NCC. There is information, advice and guidance for applicants on the website. The Pre-Admissions Support and Guidance Policy details the support arrangements available to applicants. A Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning for Admission Purposes Policy exists.

2.7 All applicants are interviewed by admissions staff and complete the required tests. Templates are used for the interview process and admissions checklists, flowcharts and guidance assist staff involved in the admissions process. Applicants with disclosed disabilities, or special educational needs are supported in line with the College's Equality and Diversity Policy, and the Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy.

2.8 The recently introduced Admissions Committee oversees the admissions process and approves each offer to be made. It reports to ASQC presenting a report on each admissions cycle. There is provision for appeals against admissions decisions which are set out in the Admissions Appeals Procedure available on the College website. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.9 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's recruitment, selection and admissions processes through examination of admissions policies and procedures, checklists and templates and relevant committee minutes. The team also met with admissions staff, senior and teaching staff, and students.

2.10 The 2018 QAA monitoring report identified issues surrounding the overall management of admissions processes. The College developed an action plan to remedy the shortcomings identified. The revised admissions process features greater scrutiny of prospective students' suitability, improved assessment tests, and a more focused and specialised approach to English language tests for entry to Pearson and BSU programmes. The College revised the staff manual on admission procedures, reviewed the recruitment process flow charts and provided additional training to all staff involved in the admissions process. Student testing as part of the selection process was modified with Maths and IT tests being dropped as they were not requirements of the awarding partners. They still form part of personal development sessions. Instead the process for English language testing was strengthened. The College revised its language tests and recruited qualified English language tutors for the assessment of English language skills.

2.11 The College also constituted an Admissions Committee for additional scrutiny of the admission processes, chaired by the Director of Studies, with the remit of ensuring students meet the awarding partners' entry requirements. Since its inception in August 2018, the new

Admissions Committee whose membership includes academic and admissions staff has had one meeting resulting in a report to ASQC on the implementation of the revised admissions processes and the outcomes of the current recruitment cycle. Staff who met the review team reported that the establishment of the committee has led to a stronger process and helped to ensure consistency of decision making across campuses.

2.12 The College makes clear to prospective students how the recruitment, selection and admission process will be conducted and what prospective students have to do by publishing the admissions policy and process on their public-facing website including the admissions appeal process, thus ensuring transparency in process. Using social media, the College offers pre-application support to through digital platforms. Advice and guidance given to prospective students meets the College's Pre-Admission Support and Guidance Policy. Students who met the review team reported that they had sufficient information and support to make an informed decision and were aware of the opportunity to appeal admissions decisions.

2.13 The College's selection process is sound. Checklists for each type of programme and standardised interview questionnaires for a structured interview assessing students' suitability to the course, intention to study and spoken English language competency ensure consistency of decision making and recording based on clearly defined criteria. Applicants are invited to disclose any disabilities during the interview process. Guidance is also given to prospective students on available study modes and campus choices. Students who met the review team found the interview process supportive.

2.14 Admissions decisions are taken by professional staff who receive regular training. The comprehensive documentation provided by the College to support admissions staff helps to ensure policies and procedures are implemented correctly. Admissions staff feel supported and confident in making appropriate decisions. Students who met the team confirmed speedy turnaround of admissions decisions. Successful applicants, confirmed by the Admissions Committee, receive an offer letter and are invited to induction. The administrative strand of the induction process ensures that students are enrolled correctly and receive correct and up-to-date logistical information.

2.15 Recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures at the College adhere to the principles of fair admission; they are transparent, valid, and inclusive and are underpinned by appropriate organisational structures. They support the College's aims of widening participation and diversity while ensuring that students are enrolled on programmes which they can complete successfully. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.16 The College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy establishes the principles for teaching, learning and assessment relevant to all programmes and is informed by the Expectations of the Quality Code. The strategy details a four-stage teaching cycle - plan, deliver, assess and evaluate. Expectations of Lecturers, Programme and Module Leaders are specified at each stage. The strategy is monitored by the College Management Committee through ASQC with action plans developed and areas of good practice disseminated by the College Management Committee.

2.17 The College has in place a range of policies to support effective teaching including an Assessment, Marking and Feedback Policy, Staff Recruitment Policy, Staff Development Policy, Teaching Observation Policy, and Employer Engagement and Work Placement Strategy. Aspects of teaching and learning are covered in the Student Charter and students are provided with College student and programme handbooks containing a range of information related to teaching and learning. Students can access the policies and other material relating to teaching and learning through the VLE. The College's policies and procedures together with their availability to students would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.18 To test the effectiveness of the College's approach to learning and teaching the review team considered the relevant policies and strategies, handbooks, committee minutes, course self-evaluation documents and the quality manual. The team met with senior, teaching and professional support staff, and had a demonstration of the VLE. It also held two meetings with students and their representatives.

2.19 Students receive a College student handbook and comprehensive programme handbooks. Module information is made available online through the VLE, which includes a number of student-facing components. The ULearn component provides access to timetables, course materials, lecture notes, library resources, assignment briefs, and acts as a vehicle for assignment submission. Although its use is currently primarily as a repository for learning materials and to direct students to additional resources, students spoke positively about the support the VLE provided them as mature learners. This contributes to the good practice identified in Expectation B4.

2.20 There are clear procedures for the recruitment and induction of new teaching staff. Staff confirmed that they were appropriately supported and that, as new members of staff, their teaching was observed. BSU approve staff to teach on its programmes. Teaching teams are specific to programmes and where different staff teach the same module at different sites, there is a process for the development and sharing of course materials to aid consistency of delivery.

2.21 The College's approach to learning and teaching focuses on developing teaching staff, improving teaching practice, developing research capacity and gaining Advance HE recognition. All staff are observed teaching and there are walk-in sessions by Programme Leaders. Staff away days, a pilot CPD programme, and discussions in standardisation and other meetings help to share effective practice. Staff development activities are recorded

through the UAccomplish area of the VLE. Staff talked positively about the structured opportunities available to them and of the importance of the developing research clusters. ASQC monitors the impact of teaching through student feedback mechanisms, annual course monitoring reports from Programme Leaders. Actions relating to teaching and learning arising from annual monitoring or from external examiners' comments feature in the College's master action plan. The 2018 NSS outcomes indicate a high and increasing level of student satisfaction with the quality of teaching they receive and students who met the team confirmed that teaching was motivating, engaging and effective.

2.22 The review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College has effective systems in place to manage and assure the quality of learning and teaching.

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

2.23 The College has put in place a range of policies to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential including an Equality and Diversity Policy, Reasonable Adjustments Policy and an Academic Support and Improvement Policy. Responsibilities of the College and students are clearly outlined in the Student Charter. The VLE also provides a mechanism for engaging students with various aspects of their personal and professional development.

2.24 Programme Management and Standardisation Committees and the Student Experience Committee are responsible for the oversight of student needs, development and achievements. The support mechanisms, policies and procedures of the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.25 To test the effectiveness of the College's student support arrangements the review team considered College policies and procedures, the records of committee meetings and met senior, teaching and support staff. The team also had a demonstration of the VLE and held two meetings with students and their representatives.

2.26 The Student Charter, which was jointly developed by staff and students, sets out the level of support that students can expect to receive and more detailed guidance is provided in the College student handbook and through the VLE. Students have personal development sessions as part of their scheduled classes and talked positively about the help these provided in developing study skills and the ability to write assessments. Students can also book 'academic surgeries' to identify key areas of support needed, address professional development needs, receive learning support and advise on progression. Students with additional learning needs and disabilities are identified through the admissions process and a student support plan is produced for such students detailing the support and reasonable adjustments required. The plan is shared with professional support and teaching staff.

2.27 The College has made a significant investment in online resources to help facilitate the learning and support of its mature learners studying across different sites and with significant evening and weekend study modes. As well as ULearn the VLE has two other major components: UGrow a student enrichment site including student support information and USucceed covering job opportunities, careers issues and details of further studies. Overall, students are positive about the guidance, support and resources available to support their learning and development. They talked positively about the design of the online support materials and their ability to access materials and guidance at a time and place of benefit to them. The College is matrix Standard accredited and students confirmed that they had access to appropriate careers guidance both through the VLE and through direct contact with professional support staff. They were also encouraged to attend local employer fairs and similar events relevant to their area of study. The considered, integrated, and highly effective use made of technology to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential is **good practice**.

2.28 The College regularly monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its student support arrangements. It produces a service area self-evaluation document, against relevant aspects of the Quality Code as part of the annual monitoring process and student support

issues are routinely discussed by ASQC.

2.29 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College has effective systems, processes and resources in place to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

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

2.30 The College Student Charter identifies the mutual responsibilities and obligations of the College community in respect of student representation and engagement. The College has an established system of student representation in place. Every cohort selects two class representatives, who in turn select their campus representatives. Campus representatives are invited to participate in relevant committees meetings. There are also elected lead student representatives for all campuses who chair the Student Experience Committee. The membership includes class and campus student representatives and senior academic and support managers. Student representatives are briefed of their responsibilities and provided with a student representative handbook.

2.31 Alongside the student representative system students also engage with the College through various feedback routes including the post-admission induction survey, mid-term feedback on lecturers' performance, end of term feedback and the National Student Survey (NSS). Student feedback is analysed, actioned where required, and outcomes are reported back to students through the student representative system and the deliberative committee structure. There are also a number of student-led societies some of which contribute to peer support and learning. The arrangements in place would allow for the Expectation to be met.

2.32 To test the effectiveness the College's approach to the engagement of students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience the review team examined the student representation system, mechanisms for the collection of student feedback and relevant committee minutes. The team also met with students and their representatives, senior, academic and professional support staff.

2.33 The College routinely captures student feedback through a range of surveys. Findings from internal student surveys are summarised and appropriate actions are identified. These are communicated to all students via 'You Said - We Did' documents, which are then disseminated via the VLE and on College noticeboards. The student representative system enables student feedback to be captured effectively and actioned via the Student Experience Committee. Meeting minutes demonstrate detailed discussions of student issues, clear identification of actions and follow-up on actions from previous meetings. Students who met the review team confirmed that the College had listened to student feedback and gave examples of changes that have taken place as a result of concerns student representatives presented to the Student Experience Committee. This included the block delivery of modules with a focus on coursework, which has improved assignment submission and student progression rates.

2.34 Student societies, whose activities are facilitated by academic staff, make a valuable contribution to peer learning and support and enable a more collaborative relationship between students and staff, thus helping to improve the overall student learning experience. The Library Society supported students accessing various library and e-learning resources while in the Aim for Distinction Society students shared their experiences in planning learning activities, time management and maintaining good academic practice. Students who met the review team spoke of the value that the societies have in supporting them in the development of study skills.

2.35 The extent of student representation and the status of student representatives in committee meetings is not always clear. The College's self-evaluation document states that student representation is available at all committees except the College Management Committee and the Assessment Standards Board. The terms of reference of the Board of Governors, however, stipulate that lead student representatives participate as special invitees. Lead student representatives are listed as members of the College Management Committee but no student representatives appear in the membership list of the Programme Management and Standardisation Committees. Committee minutes show that student attendance at board and committee meetings varies with different representatives attending each meeting and at times, student representatives are only present to discuss student issues and then leave without having the opportunity to participate in the full business of the committee. Discussions with student representatives revealed a lack of clarity in students' understanding about which meetings they could attend. The review team also received information from senior staff surrounding student membership on boards and committees that conflicted with their terms of reference. For example, the team heard that students were invited to attend but were not considered full members. This contradicts the terms of reference. The review team, therefore, **recommends** that the College strengthens the mechanisms for the representation of students on committees to improve the continuity and effectiveness of their collective participation.

2.36 The review team concludes that while the College takes deliberate steps to engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement and is responsive to student feedback, student representation at programme and institutional level is not fully effective. Overall, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.37 The College operates its assessment processes within the academic framework and regulations of the awarding partners and in accordance with roles delegated to it and set out in the written agreements. The College's approach to assessment is articulated in the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The policies for assessment, marking and feedback; internal verification; module retake; and academic appeals support staff in the assessment setting and marking process, enable it to deliver equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment. Opportunities for the recognition of prior learning exist.

2.38 For Pearson programmes the College has responsibility for setting assessments in line with Pearson requirements. Pearson is responsible for setting the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria attached to each outcome and is also responsible for the provision of generic grade descriptors that must be contextualised to the assessment set by the College. Assignment briefs are prepared by Module Leaders and approved by Programme Leaders. The College marks all assessments. There is a process of internal verification for both assignment briefs and marked assignments. The College holds regular standardisation meetings and has access to the Pearson assignment brief checking service which it makes regular use of. Assessment Boards held at the College ratify assessment decisions.

2.39 For its AAT provision, the College must provide the necessary hardware and software used in the delivery of AAT assessments, and all summative assessments are designed and marked by AAT. Students take these summative examinations at the College but under the direct instructions of AAT. The complete process of assessment is exclusively managed by AAT. In this respect, the College is an approved centre for conducting AAT computer-based tests.

2.40 In the case of BSU programmes, assessments and examinations are conducted in accordance with the relevant University policies and academic regulations. BSU provides the College with the assessment strategy for the programmes being delivered. College staff liaise with the University Link Tutor to agree drafts of examinations and coursework assignments, which are subsequently agreed by the external examiner of the University. The College first mark coursework and examinations and University staff internally moderate selected assignments and examinations before submission to external moderation by the external examiners. Assessment Boards held at the University in which the College participate confirm module grades and qualifications. The policies and procedures of the College and its awarding partners would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.41 To test the effectiveness of the College's approach to assessment the review team scrutinised assessment documentation, programme handbooks, minutes of relevant committees, awarding partner assessment guidelines, programme specifications, annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports. The team also held meetings senior, teaching staff and students and had a demonstration of the VLE.

2.42 The College manages assessment processes meeting the requirements of its awarding partners. It has clear policies in place for the operation of assessment for each its awarding body and partners. The College's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and the Assessment Marking and Moderation Policy set out approaches to assessment design to test the learning outcomes at module level. The College assesses student performance against the achievement of relevant learning outcomes.

2.43 The College's Internal Verification Policy applicable to Pearson provision provides useful guidance for staff on the design of assessment, how to link assessments to learning outcomes and contextual grade descriptors for the Higher National programmes. Assignment briefs are verified according to the awarding organisation's requirements before being issued to students. Assessment briefs are provided in module and programme handbooks, are available on the VLE, and discussed thoroughly with students during lectures.

2.44 There is variety in the modes of assessment, enabling students to demonstrate and develop a range of skills, evidenced in several examiner reports. Students are provided with guidance on assessment submission and deadlines, and those who require reasonable adjustments may be granted additional time for assessment submission. There is also a procedure for mitigating circumstances affecting late submission and for referral which is well understood by students and staff. Staff and students confirmed that assignments submitted by the due date are marked within four weeks of the final submission date. All students are provided with formative feedback, and feedback on each of their summative assessments, linked to assessment criteria and grade descriptors. Students find the feedback timely and helpful. The College has a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy in place which has enabled some learners to be admitted to Level 4, by virtue of their prior learning achievements.

2.45 Where the College is responsible for marking assessments its awarding partners monitor compliance with the criteria through internal moderation and external examination. The College receives regular positive feedback from its awarding partners' external examiners, confirming that it adheres to the relevant academic standards. External examiner reports also confirm that the assessment is robust, valid and reliable, indicating that the required achievement of the intended learning outcomes at the appropriate level have been met.

2.46 The College has clear guidance for plagiarism and academic misconduct. Students are aware of the importance of submitting their own work, as well as the processes adopted to screen their submissions. Assessment marking is regularly sampled by the internal examiner and findings acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness. Grades are recorded on the VLE and Programme Leaders monitor students' performance

2.47 For Pearson provision the College assures itself of the integrity of assessment practice through the Assessment and Standards Boards. Programme Leaders regularly communicate with external examiners. The Assessment and Standards Board acts as an examination board, confirms grades, and considers referrals and progression. The Director of Studies oversees the overall assessment and grading process and reports to the Assessment and Standards Board for approval of the grades awarded, subject to a final approval by the external examiner. Equivalent processes exist for BSU programmes with Assessment Boards being conducted by the University.

2.48 The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, and makes effective use of the awarding partners' academic frameworks.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.49 Bath Spa University and Pearson appoint external examiners for their provision. AAT sets and marks assessments for its provision and does not use external examiners. The reports from external examiners are discussed by the programme teams and action plans are prepared which are monitored and followed up by the Programme Management and Standardisation Committees. Recommendations and comments from external examiners feature in the course self-evaluation document for each programme and the reports are also received by ASQC. Actions arising from the reports feed into the College Master Plan. The reports from external examiners are shared with staff and students through the VLE. The policies and procedures of the College supported by the work of the committees, would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.50 To test the effectiveness of the College's approach of use of external examiners the review team read external examiner reports and explored their consideration in the annual monitoring process and in committees through the scrutiny of agendas and minutes. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff, and students.

2.51 External examiner reports are routinely discussed in Programme Management and Standardisation Committees and actions identified where appropriate. Generally external examiners are complimentary about the provision and suggest areas for further enhancement. Students confirmed that external examiner reports are shared with them through the VLE.

2.52 A section of the annual CSED requires Programme Leaders to identify and comment on key recommendations from external examiners with any resulting actions featuring in the action plan. While the review team was satisfied that external examiner comments were being addressed in an appropriate and timely manner, this was not always evident in the manner in which comments were highlighted in the CSED reports or in clearly related actions in the associated action plans. For example, one external examiner noted that some students reached the end of their learning journey missing major learning outcomes such as relevance of their topic choices or depth of their analysis but the relevant CSED only noted the need to improve turnaround times and to put further mechanisms in place to enhance students' performance. In another area the external examiner commented on the need to enhance new assignment creation and share good practice to allow all new assignments to be fully aligned with the required assessment philosophy. The relevant CSED does not highlight this concern. The review team, therefore, **recommends** that the College ensures that external examiners' comments and recommendations are fully considered and addressed through the annual monitoring process.

2.53 Outside of annual monitoring, actions identified from the external examiner reports are recorded in the College's master action plan and monitored by the Director of Quality Assurance, Enhancement and Development, the Director of Studies, or the Academic Director. ASQC receives CSED reports and all external examiners reports although the review team could not see clear evidence of this in the agenda or minutes of the meetings (see Expectation A2.1).

2.54 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as there are some weakness in the use made by the College of external examiners comments through the formal annual monitoring process, although these are

mitigated by the manner in which issues are logged in the overall master action plan and associated actions monitored.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.55 The responsibilities of the College for programme monitoring and review vary according to the type of provision. Pearson has ultimate responsibility for the monitoring and review of its programmes including directing the College to take necessary action as appropriate. The College is responsible for ensuring that it has appropriate processes in place to routinely monitor and periodically review its programmes. For AAT, the College must provide an annual self-assessment and must also ensure appropriate processes are in place to routinely monitor and periodically review the programmes. For BSU programmes the University Link Tutor prepares an annual report in conjunction with the College, which is considered by the University's Academic Board. All awarding partners conduct periodic reviews of their programmes to which the College is expected to contribute.

2.56 The College's approach to programme monitoring and review is set out in the Quality Improvement and Enhancement Strategy and the Quality Manual. They outline the mechanisms by which the management, review and improvement of quality supports the College's strategic objectives. A live document summarising institution-wide action planning exists to enable the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development to oversee the progress of actions. The College's quality improvement cycle incorporates annual monitoring and review of each programme, the outcomes of which are considered by Programme Management and Standardisation Committees and resulting in programme-level plans and actions. Programme actions are combined with those from service areas to inform a College-wide Quality Improvement Plan. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.57 To test to effectiveness of the College's approach to programme monitoring and review the review team considered relevant documentation including annual monitoring review reports, responsibility checklists, legal agreements and reports from the awarding partners, external examiner reports, handbooks, and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

2.58 The College complies with the University's annual programme monitoring requirements. The University's Link Tutor makes at least two annual visits as part of the formal monitoring and review of the programmes. The annual programme review focuses on a wide range of topics including entry criteria for admission; student progression; alterations and improvements to the curriculum of the programmes; assessment criteria; student feedback; staff exchange and staff development activities; research, scholarly and professional development activities by the College staff. The annual report is prepared with the cooperation of the College, is presented to the University's Academic Board, and monitored by the College within the Academic Standards and Quality Committee. Currently, the review the first report has still to be completed.

2.59 The College's annual monitoring processes for Pearson provision are broadly sound. The processes require reference to qualitative and quantitative data, student feedback and external examiner reports. There is a flow of actions from module to programme levels and through to the institutional-level Quality Improvement Plan. The annual monitoring and review of programme performance includes an analysis of data to inform the evaluation of trends in student retention, progression and academic outcomes.

The College is currently undertaking a planned strategic investment in a data management system as an enhancement initiative.

2.60 The annual monitoring and programme review reports for each Pearson programme provide an overview on the outcomes of the module evaluation process. Programme Leaders produce an annual course self-evaluation document to a standard template focusing on the programme level. The review team found variation in terms of their depth and detail. The fullness of reporting on the comments and recommendations of external examiner reports was, on occasions, diluted within the course self-evaluation document leading to the potential for less effective responses and actions to issues raised by external examiners (see recommendation in Expectation B7). The reports are routinely reviewed at Programme Management and Standardisation Committees and thereafter actions are considered at the Academic Standards and Quality Committee. However, the explicit consideration is not always clear from committee minutes (see recommendation Expectation A2.1). Actions are entered onto a master action plan and monitored by the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development. The outcomes of these review processes inform a College-wide Quality Improvement Plan.

2.61 In addition, Pearson and AAT conduct annual on-site reviews following the College's production of institutional-level self-reflective annual programme monitoring reports. The resulting awarding partner reports on the College are discussed in committee meetings and action plans are drawn up to implement any recommendations and suggestions made.

2.62 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College operates sound systems and procedures that comply with the awarding partners' processes for programme monitoring and review.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.63 The College has a Student Appeals Policy and a Complaints Policy and Procedures. Both comprise of informal and formal stages. The policies together with relevant forms are available for students on the website, in student handbooks and on the VLE. Flow charts supporting the appeals and complaints procedures documents enable students to understand the differences in process related to formal appeals and complaints for Pearson and AAT programmes at the College, students registered with NCC and students on BSU programmes. Details of complaints and their resolution are logged in a log sheet. At induction students are made aware of the process for raising complaints including the use of the centralised email system in the student support section of the VLE. The College Management Committee has oversight of academic appeals and complaints. The policies and procedures in place at the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.64 To test the effectiveness of the College's policies and process for academic appeals and complaints the review team examined policy and related documents and met with senior, academic and professional support staff, and students.

2.65 Students are provided with updated information on academic appeals and complaints procedures at the Student Experience Committee and Campus Committee meetings for dissemination to the student body. Students who met the review team were aware where to find the relevant policies, procedures, associated guidance and forms. The College has adopted the Office for Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework as an external benchmark for its complaints and appeals policies and students who have exhausted internal and awarding partner processes can escalate issues to the OIA. Staff undergo training offered by the OIA to fully understand their roles and responsibilities relating to complaints and appeals.

2.66 Following the 2017 QAA review, the College has revised its Academic Appeals Policy clarifying that academic appeals cannot be made against academic judgements. Staff and students have a clear understanding of the academic appeals procedure. Appeals are reviewed as part of the annual monitoring process.

2.67 For complaints the College aims to resolve any issues raised by students by following the informal route first, with the involvement of student representatives before guiding students down the route of a formal complaint. Staff explained how academic and support staff guide students through the process. Students feel supported in the process and provided examples of incidents where the College had listened to informal complaints and provided fast responses and resolutions. All complaints are carefully logged and processed in a timely manner, providing feedback to students on the status of the complaint. The College also monitors informal complaints received through the centralised email system on the VLE. This records which member of staff and department has been allocated responsibility to resolve the issue, when the complaint was actioned, the student response to the outcome and whether they were satisfied.

2.68 The College routinely reviews comments, concerns and complaints to inform improvements for the student experience. The Academic Standards and Quality Committee considers issues arising from academic-related complaints and the Operations Management

Committee considers non-academic student experience complaints. Minutes and reports from these meetings are reviewed by the Academic Director.

2.69 Student complaints and academic appeals are managed and reviewed with clarity and timeliness at the College, therefore, the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.70 The Expectation is not applicable as the College does not deliver learning opportunities with organisations other than its awarding partners.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.71 The Expectation is not applicable as the College does not award research degrees.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.72 In reaching its judgement about academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Out of the 11 Expectations in this judgement area 9 are applicable to the College. Expectations B10 and B11 are not applicable as the College does not deliver learning opportunities with organisations other than its awarding partners and does not award research degrees.

2.73 All the applicable Expectations are met and the associated level of risk is low for seven of them. Two Expectations carry a moderate risk and attracted a recommendation. Recommendations relate to the effectiveness of student representation (Expectation B5) and the consideration of resolution of external examiner comments and recommendations through the annual monitoring process (Expectation B7).

2.74 There is one item of good practice in this judgement areas, which relates to use made of technology to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential (Expectation B4).

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

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College provides information for a variety of stakeholders in print and digital formats, in line with the guidance from relevant awarding partners and operates its own internal procedures for the approval of published information. There is a Public Information about Higher Education Provision Policy which is referenced to the Quality Code together with approval and oversight procedures that include responsibilities for information review and sign-off. The scope of the policy is wide ranging and covers information published on the College website, the VLE, social media, promotional and marketing material, handbooks and policies. Information about BSU programmes also requires approval by the awarding body prior to publication.

3.2 A public information team comprising of members of senior management oversees the implementation of the policy. Members approve information using a standard template and monitor the accuracy, timeliness and consistency of published information on a virtual basis. A digital log of all approved material is kept for monitoring purposes. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.3 To test the effectiveness of the College's procedures for the production and approval of published information the review team examined relevant policies and procedures, scrutinised various types of published information in print and digital format and held meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff, and students.

3.4 The College website provides a wide range of information to prospective students and other external stakeholders. This includes information on the mission and vision of the College, its governing body, detailed information on each programmes of study as well as comprehensive information on admissions, student services and support. Students who met the review team found the information to be accurate and helpful in making an informed decision. They confirmed that information is easy to find and they were able to ask questions to gain further information before application.

3.5 The College VLE with its various sub-sections holds a vast amount of vital information for students' learning, personal and professional development (see Expectation B4) including links to relevant academic policies. It is well used by students and staff and students praised the quantity and quality of information made available to them. They were particularly complimentary about the quality of study support materials and access to academic guidance.

3.6 Comprehensive and informative programme handbooks and a generic College student handbook which is provided to all students are valued by them as resources and reliable sources of information.

3.7 The policy on Public Information about Higher Education Provision clearly outlines the processes and responsibilities for the approval of published information and these are well understood by staff.

3.8 The review team concludes that the College produces information that is fit for purpose, accessible, and trustworthy. Therefore, the Expectation is met, and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The College's approach to enhancement is set out in the Quality Improvement and Enhancement Strategy, elements of which are also detailed in the Quality Manual and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. Oversight of the strategy rests with the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development and the Director of Studies and its implementation is monitored throughout relevant committees.

4.2 At a strategic level, the Board of Governors oversees the quality of teaching and learning via reports and minutes from the deliberative committees. The Senior Management Team directs the operation and evaluation of the Quality Improvement and Enhancement Strategy through key committees such as the College Management Committee and the Academic Standards and Quality Committee. Student Services and academic staff are the primary means for delivering quality improvements. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's approach to the improvement of the quality of student learning opportunities through the consideration of documentation relating to relevant policy and strategy documents, annual monitoring and review reports and associated action plans. The team also met with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

4.4 The College's Quality Improvement and Enhancement Strategy notes that quality improvement is the responsibility of all staff and defines seven student-focused principles for enhancement and the responsibilities for all stakeholders. The strategy references the Quality Code, and is informed by the College's strategic priorities. The Board of Governors has been instrumental in developing and supporting the College and the College has taken steps to strengthen the board to support its aims and aspirations for the future through the establishment of a task group for the improvement of its annual monitoring process.

4.5 The College demonstrates a strong commitment to the enhancement of students' learning opportunities through deliberate quality enhancement and continuous improvement activities. Its quality improvement cycle is based on information systematically generated by students, external examiners and other stakeholders such as the awarding partners and from staff. Self-assessments at programme, service area and College level are routinely used to improve the quality of learning opportunities and the student experience. This information is considered within the College's own review mechanisms, and those required by its awarding partners, and includes the identification of good practice. The outcomes of these processes inform the quality improvement and development initiatives at strategic level, which are incorporated in the Quality Improvement and Enhancement Strategy. The impact of improvement and enhancement is monitored through the deliberative committee structures, though little explicit evidence of this exists within the minutes of meetings.

4.6 Staff described a number of initiatives underway with the aim of enhancing student learning opportunities. Examples of strategy-led enhancements include the provision of flexible options for learning to enable students to study alongside work and family commitments and support interventions to assist students to achieve their potential. Current students, graduates, and staff confirm the benefits of these measures. The flexible delivery

approach of fixed timetables with some block delivery and evening and weekend classes combined with professional and academic support within professional development sessions enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential more fully. The College's deliberate steps to enhance student learning, while improving employability skills is having a positive impact in terms of student engagement in learning.

4.7 Recognising the learning needs of its student body the College has also implemented an enhanced VLE to support learning, and enhance student support. This provides students with access to all course materials, learning resources and information relating to their programmes. Coursework is submitted through the VLE, which includes plagiarism screening of written work, and students can access feedback on assessments directly from it. Within the platform students can also access the library database, read policies and procedures, book support sessions, access help guides, and read examiner reports. Access to careers and further study information, College news, enrichment opportunities and student engagement details are also available. The VLE is logically structured and students say it is helpful, accessible, and a vital source of information relating to all aspects of their studies. This integrated multi-functional online platform, which provides a wide range of accessible information to all stakeholders, demonstrates a considered use of technology that is effective in enhancing the wider learning environment.

4.8 The College takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities at institutional level. There are specific initiatives and an ethos that expects and encourages enhancement of student learning opportunities. Enhancement initiatives are evidenced at the end of the quality cycle within the Quality Improvement Plan, though outcomes of any systematic monitoring of the initiatives is less explicit. Notwithstanding this, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

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

Glossary

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

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

term in our review processes.

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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