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

May 2017

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the UK College of Business and Computing Ltd. The review took place from 23 to 25 May 2017 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Dave Dowland
- Ms Amanda Greason
- Mr Robert Kelly
- Ms Cara Williams (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.

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

Key findings

Judgements

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

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

Recommendations

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

By September 2017:

- revise the Appeals Policy to ensure that academic appeals are not permissible against academic judgement (Expectation B9).

By December 2017:

- articulate separate admissions appeals and complaints policies (Expectations B2 and C)
- examine ways of reducing the turnaround time for feedback on summative assessment (Expectation B6)
- where students are to be registered with another college, ensure that this information is clearly articulated to prospective students (Expectation C)
- articulate the formal strategy for enhancement (Enhancement).

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

About the provider

UK College of Business and Computing Ltd (UKCBC) is an independent higher education provider established in 2001. UKCBC offers Pearson level 4 and 5 Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and Association of Accounting Technician (AAT) level 1 to level 4 qualifications. It has been approved by Gateway to offer programmes but none are currently offered. The main office of UKCBC is at Wentworth House (Gants Hill), with five other campuses at Lords House (Gants Hill), Holborn, Park Royal, Cricklewood and Oxford Street (for English as a Foreign Language programmes). Students choose, or are allocated to, one of the UKCBC campuses that is a commutable distance from their home and offers the programmes of their choice and suitability, subject to space.

In 2014, UKCBC entered into a sub-contracted partnership with a local further education college Redbridge College (renamed New City College on 1 April 2017 on its merger with Tower Hamlets College and Hackney Community College). Redbridge College (as was) sub-contracts UKCBC to teach students and register them with the awarding organisation, Pearson. Students are registered students of Redbridge College (as was). This applies to some students on the HND programmes in Business, Travel and Tourism Management, and Computing and Systems Development. In June 2015 the agreement was extended to include all students studying on the level 5 HND in Health and Social Care (Management Pathway).

All students on HND programmes registered at UKCBC are Home and European Union students eligible for fee loans and supported by maintenance loans. The students on AAT programmes are either self-funding or sponsored by their employers. UKCBC is subject to an annual student number control by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. At the time of the review, a total of 807 students are registered on HND and AAT programmes across all UKCBC campuses. There are just over 1,800 students registered at Redbridge College that UKCBC teaches under its sub-contracted arrangement.

UKCBC revised its Board of Governors in 2015. The Board oversees the strategic development, academic affairs, financial soundness, statutory compliances and related areas of UKCBC, and provides strategic direction. The revised Board of Governors comprises external experts and Directors of UKCBC. The senior management of UKCBC participates in the meetings as invitees.

UKCBC has reviewed its overall management structure and plans to manage partnerships and to achieve teaching degree awarding powers. UKCBC is working towards achieving partnerships with UK universities to enable students to progress to top-up and degree qualifications. UKCBC is currently in the process of appointing an Academic Dean to manage university programmes and partnerships. The Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development oversees the delivery of HNDs and other academic programmes through the Director of Studies and academic teams, supported by tutors and academic support staff. More responsibility has been delegated to Programme Leaders in managing programmes.

UKCBC reviewed its committee structures and quality monitoring systems in response to the QAA monitoring visit in 2016 to maintain oversight across committees. The revised committee reporting structure was implemented from 1 November 2016, which facilitates flow of information in both directions so that the committees functioning at lower levels have adequate input from higher level committees.

UKCBC was subject to a QAA Review for Educational Oversight in June 2014, which concluded that there was: confidence in how UKCBC manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding organisations; confidence

in how UKCBC manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of its awarding organisations; and reliance on the information UKCBC produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers. Five advisable and six desirable recommendations were identified. In June 2015 and May 2016 the QAA annual monitoring reports recorded that UKCBC had made acceptable progress against its action plan.

The review team considered the progress made by UKCBC in implementing the recommendations and concludes that they have all 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   UKCBC is approved to deliver programmes of three awarding organisations: Pearson, AAT and Gateway - although, at present, it is delivering only programmes of Pearson and AAT. The awarding organisations retain responsibility for setting standards as informed by the FHEQ characteristics and credit frameworks. Programmes are delivered at levels 4 and 5. The HNDs have been developed by Pearson in collaboration or in reference to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. UKCBC's responsibilities for its Pearson and AAT provision lie solely in the recruitment and selection of students and the delivery of the programme. UKCBC designs the assessment for Pearson programmes in line with Pearson requirements, while the AAT assessment remains the responsibility of the awarding organisation.

1.2   There are clear arrangements through which the awarding organisation is responsible for setting academic standards and a clear definition of the responsibilities placed on UKCBC by the awarding organisations.

1.3 The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation A1 to be met.

1.4 The review team tested UKCBC's approach to maintaining the academic standards of its provision by considering a wide range of documentation, including agreements with the awarding organisations, responsibility checklists, programme specifications, terms of reference of committees, and minutes of committee meetings. It also met the Principal, senior staff, teaching staff, support staff and students.

1.5 UKCBC is aware of both the standards of the awards it delivers on behalf of its awarding organisations and its own responsibilities to ensure that programmes are delivered to reflect these standards, using the guidance materials provided by the awarding organisations. UKCBC's committee structure ensures it exercises oversight of academic standards. The Assessment and Standards Board and the Programme Management and Standardisation Committee report to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC), which is the committee with oversight for academic standards and which has a specific remit to oversee and ensure academic standards and quality processes across campuses and programmes.

1.6 The review team concludes that Expectation A1 is met. The associated level of risk is low, as the awarding organisations have ultimate responsibility for the setting of academic standards and UKCBC effectively discharges its responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards within the terms of its agreements with the awarding organisations.

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   UKCBC delivers awards of its awarding organisations, Pearson and AAT, under their academic frameworks and regulations. The responsibilities checklists indicate that UKCBC must deliver the programmes to meet these regulations. For Pearson, the relevant programme specifications clearly outline the details of the programme, levels and what assessment is required to ensure that credit is awarded when students meet the learning outcomes. For AAT provision, the relevant regulations are contained in the AAT Quality Manual. Programme handbooks provide regulatory information for students.

1.8   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.9   The review team tested UKCBC's approach to ensuing it implements the academic regulations of the awarding organisations through the consideration of a wide range of documentation, including programme specifications, programme handbooks, agreements with the awarding organisations, responsibilities, external verifier reports, annual monitoring reports, and minutes of committees. It also met the Principal, senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.10   UKCBC's committee system and quality assurance arrangements ensure that it meets the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding organisations and awards credit within the regulations of each awarding organisation. UKCBC's annual monitoring process enables it to evaluate itself and thereby monitor that its actions are meeting the academic frameworks and regulations of its awarding organisations. Pearson external verifier reports confirm that UKCBC is adhering to the Pearson academic regulations.

1.11   The review team concludes that Expectation A2.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC has appropriate procedures in place to effectively adhere to the awarding organisations' requirements.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.12   The responsibility for the production and maintenance of programme specifications resides with the awarding organisations. UKCBC publishes these on its virtual learning environment (VLE) and relevant information from the programme specifications is provided in programme handbooks.

1.13   The policies and procedure of UKCBC would allow Expectation A2.2 to be met.

1.14   The review team tested UKCBC's approach to the provision of programme specifications through the consideration of a range of documentation, including programme specifications and programme handbooks. It also met the Principal, senior staff, teaching staff and students. It was also provided with a demonstration of UKCBC's VLE.

1.15   Programme specifications are used by staff in the delivery of the provision and made available to students on UKCBC's VLE. Relevant information is also contained within programme handbooks, which are also made available to students through this medium.

1.16   The review team concludes that Expectation 2.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC has appropriate procedures in place to effectively adhere to the awarding organisations' requirements.

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

1.17   UKCBC's awarding organisations have procedures in place for the approval and monitoring of taught programmes. The awarding organisations are responsible for confirming that programmes meet the qualification descriptors and threshold standards specified in the FHEQ using its own procedures. Pearson is responsible for designing and approving the overall programme and individual modules, their equivalence on the FHEQ, the learning outcomes, grading criteria and the permitted combinations of modules. AAT designs the programme and curriculum and provides online test options for continuous monitoring of student progress. UKCBC is an approved computer-based test centre and maintains the relevant AAT standards prescribed for a computer-based test centre. UKCBC follows the required procedures of both awarding organisations and is subject to their external monitoring processes.

1.18   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation A3.1 to be met.

1.19   The review team considered UKCBC documentation relating to programme approval and the related documentation from awarding organisations. Internal and external processes were discussed with senior, support and teaching staff, as well as students, in order to ascertain their level of engagement with the described internal and external processes.

1.20   AAT qualifications comply with the AAT Code of Practice and approval criteria. There is a clear articulated process of setting and verifying assessments for AAT to which UKCBC adheres.

1.21   The respective responsibilities for the delivery of Pearson programmes are described in the responsibilities checklist. Pearson is responsible for ensuring that academic standards are secure and established when a programme is developed and approved. Programme design includes setting assessment activities at the appropriate level for the qualification and checking through internal verification and external verifying processes. UKCBC is responsible for the selection of relevant modules that contribute to the permitted combination and therefore the final award and level. UKCBC selects modules, taking into account the student experience, employment, human and physical resources, and progression to university programmes. The Director of Studies discusses options with the Programme Leader, which subsequently go to the leadership team and the ASQC for approval. The Programme Management and Standardisation Committee deliberates on student academic needs prior to approval by the ASQC.

1.22   UKCBC is responsible for designing effective learning materials and the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Pearson is responsible for identifying, implementing and approving modifications to the programmes. UKCBC is responsible for putting in place processes and procedures to regularly review and modify as appropriate to ensure their continued relevance and validity. There is a policy and procedures document on Programme Design, Development and Approval, and UKCBC has a clear Programme Design and Approval Policy.

1.23   Pearson and AAT responsibilities checklists demonstrate that UKCBC is aware of its responsibilities for maintaining standards and ensuring an appropriate quality of learning opportunities. A constructive relationship has been developed between UKCBC staff and Pearson and AAT external verifiers.

1.24   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC is engaged fully with the appropriate frameworks and regulations of the awarding organisations.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.25   The awarding organisations are responsible for ensuring that the design of the qualifications offered by UKCBC are awarded only where students achieve learning outcomes and are of the appropriate academic standard. The awarding organisations also have responsibility for ensuring the continuing relevance and validity of the qualifications, introducing modifications where appropriate.

1.26   The UKCBC Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy stipulates that summative assessment must ensure that students achieve the learning outcomes of the qualification. Learning outcomes are set by the awarding organisations along with the assessment criteria for each outcome. Programme specification documents identify the learning outcomes for each qualification. Reasonable adjustments are made to assessments where required for students with special needs or disability. AAT programmes follow a curriculum designed by the awarding organisation incorporating formative assessment tests. Summative assessment is also carried out by the awarding organisation. UKCBC conducts internal verification. AAT carries out an annual review to ensure that UKCBC meets its requirements.

1.27   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation A3.2 to be met.

1.28   The review team read documentation provided by UKCBC, including checklists detailing the respective responsibilities of UKCBC and the awarding organisations, in addition to the: Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy; Assessment and Marking Policy; external verifier and reviewer reports; and programme specification documents. The team also met senior and teaching staff.

1.29   The Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development is responsible for maintaining academic standards, with oversight provided by the ASQC. The ASQC reports to the UKCBC management committee, which directs and monitors the overall management of UKCBC, including compliance to academic standards.

1.30   There is a significant volume of positive feedback within external verifier and reviewer reports regarding UKCBC assessment and internal verification practice. Assignment briefs are well designed and subject to routine internal and external verification.

1.31   Adherence to the relevant Pearson and AAT Quality Manuals when designing learning programmes and assessments ensures that UKCBC enables students to achieve the learning outcomes of the qualifications. Staff demonstrated awareness of the requirements.

1.32   The volume of learning delivered by UKCBC is appropriate to allow students to achieve the specified learning outcomes. It is also in line with the guidance in the Pearson

programme specification documents.

1.33   Summative assessments designed by UKCBC are checked by external examiners appointed by the awarding organisations. Annual monitoring is conducted by external verifiers to ensure that the assessments are appropriate and at the national standard. They also ensure that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria are adhered to.

1.34   Internal verification of assessment and assignment briefs is carried out by UKCBC in line with the requirements of the awarding organisations and the UKCBC Assessment and Marking Policy. Assignment briefs are well designed, including the learning outcomes to be assessed, the criteria used to grade work, and a glossary of commonly used academic verbs to assist students understand the criteria provided. UKCBC has internal processes for the standardisation of assessment to ensure consistency.

1.35   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC has in place the necessary management and quality assurance processes to meet the awarding organisations' requirements.

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

1.36   Responsibility for monitoring and review in relation to academic standards and ensuring alignment with the UK threshold academic standards rests with the awarding organisations. They exercise this through the application of external verifier and periodic review procedures.

1.37   UKCBC undertakes an annual programme monitoring review to ensure strategic oversight, which results in programme actions plans feeding into an overall Quality Improvement Plan. UKCBC has a policy and procedure on Annual Monitoring Review.

1.38   The policies and procedure of UKCBC would allow Expectation A3.3 to be met.

1.39   The review team tested this Expectation by reading UKCBC documentation relating to monitoring and review, and by considering Annual Monitoring Reviews produced by UKCBC and external examiners' reports. Details were explored through discussions with staff involved with the monitoring and review process and student representatives.

1.40   Pearson provides a comprehensive external quality report, and UKCBC reviews its provision through the completion of annual returns for both Pearson and AAT. These annual returns are monitored by the ASQC to enable UKCBC to ensure that academic standards are being maintained. Action plans are then drawn up to ensure that matters raised in the returns are addressed. The action plans are then monitored by the senior team of UKCBC. For AAT programmes, UKCBC provides an annual self-assessment report.

1.41   UKCBC has a range of appropriate mechanisms for internal quality monitoring, including annual programme monitoring, based on a commitment to self-evaluation and action planning. UKCBC produces programme-level Annual Monitoring Reviews for its awarding organisations. They address programme-specific information on student progression, completion and achievement, as well as programme enhancement, such as responses to external verifier reports, staff development and scholarly activities.

1.42   UKCBC's Programme Management and Standardisation Committee considers annual monitoring reports. This process includes the systematic use of external verifier feedback and reports from its awarding organisations. Pearson conducts an on-site annual Academic Management Review following a provider self-reflective Annual Programme Monitoring Report. The review reports received from external verifiers representing the awarding organisations are discussed in committee meetings, and action plans are drawn to implement any recommendations and suggestions made in the reports.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.44   The awarding organisations are responsible for the standards of awards and approve UKCBC to offer programmes on the basis that its delivery and assessment meets awarding organisation requirements. UKCBC only offers programmes that are listed on the Qualifications and Credit Frameworks or Regulated Qualifications Framework to ensure alignment with FHEQ requirements.

1.45   The internal verification of assessment decisions forms part of UKCBC's approach to the management of alignment with academic standards. External verifiers and reviewers are appointed by the awarding organisations to review assignment and internal verification processes, and provide impartial advice and recommendations to ensure that the academic standards required by the awarding organisations are being achieved.

1.46   UKCBC has a wealth of external academic expertise within its governing body, which receive minutes from the ASQC. The ASQC is the committee with responsibility for maintaining academic standards. UKCBC has a five-stage quality process, which incorporates the quality assurance of all stages of the student journey from recruitment to certification.

1.47   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.48   The review team read external verifier and reviewer reports, comments and recommendations, the profile of the governing organisation, the Programme Design and Approval Policy, and minutes of the committees, and held meetings with staff.

1.49   UKCBC carries out monitoring and action planning following external review. The governing body minutes demonstrate consideration of risk management with regard to curriculum developments. Staff with whom the review team met were aware of the value of the use of external expertise and plan to extend this through the governing body.

1.50   The review team concludes that Expectation A3.4 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC uses appropriate external advice, and the awarding organisations use external input to programme design.

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

1.51   In reaching its judgement about academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.52   All of the applicable Expectations in this area have been met and the level of risk is judged to be low.

1.53   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of awarding organisations at UKCBC **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   UKCBC follows the procedures of the awarding organisations for the design and approval of programmes. For Pearson, UKCBC is responsible for the selection of relevant modules that contribute to the level and to the award. UKCBC is responsible for designing effective learning materials and a Learning and Teaching Strategy that meets the expectations of the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment levels 4-7. AAT designs the programme and curriculum, and provides online test options for continuous monitoring of student progress. The summative assessments are externally set by AAT and UKCBC is an approved test centre for this purpose.

2.2   UKCBC has a clearly articulated policy and procedures for programme design, development and approval. For AAT, UKCBC has no responsibility for the setting and approving of programmes; for Pearson, UKCBC selects appropriate modules to comprise each programme and designs the assessment schedules subject to approval by Pearson.

2.3   The policies and procedure of UKCBC would allow Expectation B1 to be met.

2.4   The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these policies and procedures by examining documentation including responsibility checklists, minutes and terms of reference of key academic committees and meetings, and background documents. Details were explored in meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, as well as students.

2.5   The ASQC takes overall responsibility for maintaining academic standards. The UKCBC Management Committee has overall management of compliance to academic standards with oversight by the Board of Governors. The Assessment and Standards Board confirms standardisation of assignments and grading processes, and monitors action plans on external verifiers' reports.

2.6   Programme design is linked to human and physical resource planning. For Pearson, the process of module selection takes into account feedback provided by each lecturer for every class delivered, student feedback, external reviewers from the awarding organisations, employability skills, career prospects and progression routes to university top-up degrees, and students' aspirations and achievements.

2.7   Oversight is in place for the design of new programmes and amendments to existing programmes and discussed at the ASQC; minor changes to programme design are signed off by the Programme Management and Standardisation Committee. Committee minutes confirm that the evaluation of the approval process remains fit for purpose or requires improvement.

2.8   UKCBC takes student feedback into account in the selection of modules. For example, student feedback led to modifications to the module selection of the HND in Computer Systems Development, with the Research Skills module being replaced with the Networking Technologies module. Approval for these minor changes to the module are

supported by a clear rationale that students acquire research skills in other modules and networking skills that will better support students moving onto level 5. This was approved by the ASQC.

2.9   The review team concludes that Expectation B1 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC's processes for programme design and development adhere to the requirements of its awarding organisations.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.10   The Admissions Policy and the associated policy on pre-admission support and guidance set the basis for recruitment, selection and admission. There is also a policy for the recognition of prior learning. UKCBC is responsible for admissions, with Pearson and AAT having responsibility for ensuring that UKCBC meets their requirements.

2.11   There is information, advice and guidance for applicants and incoming students that facilitates their subsequent transition into their programmes. There are templates and records to support systematic admissions communications, the consideration of applications and the provision of pre-admissions support, including standards for the turnaround of admissions decisions and feedback to applicants. Applicants are interviewed by admissions staff, who use tests as required. Applicants who are not considered sufficiently qualified for modules are referred to another college for other, preparatory, study options.

2.12   The induction of new students includes a range of information and support, and there are opportunities to meet each other during the induction process in order to develop mutual support networks.

2.13   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation B2 to be met.

2.14   The review team tested the evidence through scrutiny of the policy and supporting documents showing its application, and by examining evidence available on UKCBC's VLE and the website. The team also met students and staff to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of UKCBC's processes.

2.15   UKCBC is mindful of the backgrounds of students, many of whom are mature students with personal commitments and experiencing higher education for the first time. Students with whom the review team met reported that they were satisfied with the information and support that they had received at the application stage and that they appreciated the helpfulness of UKCBC staff.

2.16   UKCBC's revised committee structure and management groups is still being embedded and there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of the evaluation of admissions. UKCBC gathers student feedback on their experience of admissions and induction, and reports on the actions taken in response. The admissions and marketing departments reflect on their performance through a managerial self-evaluation reporting system called the Service Area Self-Evaluation Document (SASED) although the system is at an early stage of development. The SASED reports are taken into account in UKCBC's wider annual self-evaluation document.

2.17   Staff involved in admissions receive training, mostly focusing on specific areas of expertise such as student finance and international admission qualifications. Admissions staff ensure that requests for the reconsideration of admissions decisions are managed by staff with no previous involvement in the case.

2.18   UKCBC has an Equality and Diversity Policy and a policy to support students with special educational needs and disabilities Students' needs are identified at the point of admission, enrolment and induction, and UKCBC provides support to students to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance.

2.19   UKCBC publishes on its website an Admissions Appeals Policy and Procedure and a separate Admissions Complaints-Appeals Policy, which conflate the definitions of admissions, complaints and appeals with a resultant lack of clarity in the routes for addressing issues within each category. The review team **recommends** that, by December 2017, UKCBC articulate separate admissions appeals and complaints policies.

2.20   The review team concludes that Expectation B2 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC has appropriate procedures in place.

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

2.21   UKCBC has a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. This sets out the expectations of UKCBC in relation to effective practice in teaching, learning and assessment in the form of detailed lists comprising a teaching cycle with the four elements of Plan, Deliver, Assess and Evaluate.

2.22   Strategic responsibility for learning, teaching and assessment lies with the UKCBC Management Committee, which reports to the Board of Governors. This is supported on a strategic level by the ASQC, which approves the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. There are three functional management committees within the UKCBC committee structure involved in teaching, learning and assessment.

2.23   The UKCBC Principal is responsible for the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment, with the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development responsible for quality assurance. Operational responsibility for the delivery of the Quality Cycle, which includes the elements of Plan, Deliver, Assess and Evaluate, lies with Programme Leaders

2.24   UKCBC has a Teaching and Learning Observation Policy. The management and development of learning and teaching is supported through teaching observation carried out by UKCBC academic managers and leads to lecturer performance being RAG rated (red, amber and green). This leads to an appropriate development plan for each lecturer. Student feedback on each lecturer's performance is routinely collected.

2.25   Suitably qualified and experienced staff are recruited to meet the requirements of awarding organisations. There is a Staff Development Policy in place.

2.26   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation B3 to be met.

2.27   The review team read handbooks; policy documents, including the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy; records of teaching observation; and student feedback outcomes. Also reviewed were the UKCBC committee structure, meeting minutes, course self-evaluation documents and the Quality Manual. The team spoke to the Principal, senior staff, teaching and support staff, and had a demonstration of the VLE.

2.28   Staff development plans are either managed or self-directed depending on the outcome. Of the 55 teaching observations that were RAG rated, 50 were rated as green or amber. New staff are not rated but are observed during their first semester, and those rated green are recommended to be utilised for peer observation and support. Senior and teaching staff are aware of how peer observation is used to standardise practice. The number of teaching observations carried out represent a high proportion of teaching staff and have been carried out since January 2016. Student feedback on lecturers' performance is positive, with, for example, students scoring an average of over 4 out of 5 on the questions regarding sessions being intellectually stimulating and lecturers encouraging student participation.

2.29   Students show low levels of timely achievement of obtaining a qualification within the two-year period of Pearson programmes for the first two cohorts of the 2014-15 intake, although it is recognised that they have five years to complete the award. UKCBC managers, Programme Leaders and teaching staff are aware of the need to improve the timely achievement of qualifications and have plans in place to address performance, with ten specific actions outlined. The UKCBC academic support team provides support to students who have not achieved all the modules to complete their programmes within the two-year period of their Pearson programme. Staff explained that some of the reasons were outside of UKCBC's direct control due to the demographic of UKCBC's students who are more mature in age and often have work, family and other commitments outside of UKCBC.

2.30   All students have access to the VLE and e-learning system. This access is communicated to students in the student handbook. Seventy-eight per cent of students surveyed were positive about e-learning resources. UKCBC has employed an e-learning expert to enhance the system further. This has resulted, following student consultation, in a revised platform for the VLE. Students confirm that they find the new system to be much improved.

2.31   The review team concludes that Expectation B3 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC has comprehensive 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

2.32   UKCBC and student responsibilities for enabling students to develop and achieve are clearly outlined in the Student Charter, which is jointly developed by staff and students.

2.33   Student development and achievement is managed through the committee structure, in particular, the Programme Management and Standardisation Committee, which considers reports from the awarding organisations, student input and actions agreed at other UKCBC committees. The planning and resourcing of programmes of study is also the responsibility of this committee.

2.34   There is a high level of student involvement in UKCBC committees. Student representatives are included in the membership of the ASQC, and the Operations Management, Campus and Student Experience committees.

2.35   Programme handbooks set out the higher level skills that students need to develop. These handbooks, the Student Charter and policies, including the Teaching and Learning Observation Policy and the Internal Verification Policy and Procedure, are available to students through the VLE.

2.36   The UKCBC approach to recognising the personal and academic barriers a student may have, and providing appropriate support to overcome them, is contained in the UKCBC Academic Support and Improvements Policy. The resources necessary to deliver the objectives of this Policy have been provided through the appointment of an Academic Support and Improvements Manager, three full-time tutors and a member of academic support staff. UKCBC plans to increase this resource. The Academic Support and Improvements Manager is responsible for the coordination of this activity across the different campuses. The department monitors student progress and absence and provides support and counselling to improve student achievement.

2.37   UKCBC recruits students with a wide variety of backgrounds resulting in a diverse student population. It has an Equality and Diversity Policy, which is signposted to the requirements of the Quality Code and relevant legislation.

2.38   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation B4 to be met.

2.39   The review team considered UKCBC policies, procedures, records and documents including the committee structure, linkage between committees and student involvement in quality review. Internal and external monitoring and review processes were reviewed, as well as documentation and support provided for students allowing for their varying needs. The review team met students and senior, teaching and support staff.

2.40   The Student Experience Committee is well attended. The October 2016 meeting was attended by 23 student representatives. The minutes include agreed actions that are followed up at the next meeting. These actions are also reported to the Programme Management and Standardisation Committee.

2.41   Students with special educational needs and disabilities are identified through the admissions process and supported appropriately. A Student Support Plan is produced by the Admissions Manager detailing the support and reasonable adjustments required.

Both teaching and academic support staff confirmed the process operated effectively.

2.42   Students with whom the review team met and the student submission to this report expressed satisfaction for the resources available to them. Eighty-three per cent of students surveyed indicated that they received good support from lecturers; 81 per cent of students agree that feedback is provided on their progress. Students are encouraged to discuss feedback with their tutors to identify development opportunities and reflective learning. Students with whom the team met were positive about the feedback they received on assessed work.

2.43   Student destinations data indicate that the approach and actions of UKCBC in enabling student development and achievement is effective, as 87 per cent students who participated progressed to university or work.

2.44   There are library resources at each campus that fulfil the requirements of all the programmes UKCBC offers. Students state that although facilities are small, they are adequate, library staff are helpful and meet student representatives regularly to discuss resources. Library staff confirmed that students have access to electronic journals and academic networks as well as a wide range of e-books. Use of these resources is increasing.

2.45   Personal and professional development sessions are timetabled for an hour at the beginning and end of the day to support holistic skills such as academic writing and English language skills. Academic surgeries have been piloted at UKCBC's Lord's House and Cricklewood campuses and, due to the success of this initiative, are to be held on all campuses.

2.46   UKCBC provides a careers guidance service that includes support for applications for employment or progression to further study. Sixty-nine per cent of students expressed satisfaction with this service although they recommend that UKCBC provide a dedicated member of staff to help students with career planning. Students state that the attendance patterns available enable them to work and develop careers while studying. They are encouraged to relate work in assignments to work experience. UKCBC has an Employer Engagement and Placement Policy. Pre-admission support for students includes career options. Where a student requests transition from one programme to another or needs to defer study due to extenuating circumstances, Programme Leaders and support staff provide support and guidance.

2.47   Supporting study through the use of Information Technology is the provision of computer labs at each campus, with 250 workstations available across UKCBC and Wi-Fi connectivity for students who choose to use their own devices. UKCBC has a software licence that allows students to download Microsoft Office software free of charge.

2.48   As result of student feedback, UKCBC has purchased for AAT students access to software allowing remote access to resources. UKCBC is in the process of introducing video teaching on the VLE and is trialling live streaming of lectures.

2.49   The review team concludes that Expectation B4 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC has the necessary systems, staff 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

2.50   UKCBC has student engagement as central to its approach to the management of quality. There is a system of student representation including lead student representatives and campus and class-based student representatives. Students are well informed about their responsibilities through the Student Charter and the Student Handbook. The Student Charter sets out UKCBC's responsibility to foster student participation in academic development and module management. Students are supported through training and briefing materials including checklists of responsibilities, which they sign. They are reminded of their roles at their first committee meeting. Pearson and AAT have explicitly defined responsibilities for student engagement, including arrangements for students to meet external verifiers.

2.51   Student representatives have regular meetings with the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development. Student representatives are paid for attending meetings and use social media to communicate with other students. There is an overarching student society to promote student participation in the life of UKCBC, together with several other student societies.

2.52   Students are included on most UKCBC committees. The student experience meetings are chaired by the lead student representatives and are central to the framework for student engagement.

2.53   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation B5 to be met.

2.54   The review team tested UKCBC's practices through the scrutiny of policy documents and committee papers, the student written submission to this report, and discussions with staff and students during the review.

2.55   Student representatives are enthusiastic about the life of UKCBC including the contribution of the lead student representative. Students welcome the opportunity to serve as student representatives and there is a high level of attendance at the Student Experience Committee and Campus Committee meetings.

2.56   Some students find it difficult to take part in student engagement activities bearing in mind their social and personal backgrounds, and UKCBC has taken various initiatives to encourage participation including incentives and social events. Some students participate in 'quality circles', which are a means of alerting UKCBC to housekeeping and other issues.

2.57   UKCBC uses a range of feedback mechanisms from students including surveys and took part in the National Student Survey in 2017. The senior management team takes account of student feedback through a series of action plans, which are gathered together in a UKCBC-wide Quality Improvement Plan. The structure for management reporting and reflection is in development and so there is limited evidence of formal review of the student engagement system, but there are indications that the system is being developed and enhanced. For example, the senior lead student representative has recently been invited to attend a meeting of the Board of Governors.

2.58   A series of improvements and enhancements have been introduced partly through student feedback, including, for example: the shift towards a block mode of

teaching, enabling students to complete their studies on two units of study at a time; major improvements to the VLE; improvements to library resources; and changes to arrangements for unit selection. The recently introduced electronic support system on the VLE as a means of tracking the turnaround of responses to issues or concerns raised by students has met with positive support from students.

2.59   The review team concludes that Expectation B5 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC has appropriate policies in place to effectively engage with students.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.60   Oversight of UKCBC's assessment process is the responsibility of the awarding organisations, which provide external verification. As a result, UKCBC must operate assessment processes within the academic framework and regulations of the awarding organisations and in accordance with roles delegated to them and set out in written agreements. UKCBC ensures that its policies and practices are also fully in line with Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment: BTEC levels 4 to 7 (2015-16). The UKCBC Assessment, Marking and Feedback Policy and Internal Verification Policy support staff in the assessment setting and marking process, enabling them to deliver equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment. The assessment process is also articulated in line with the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

2.61   Pearson is responsible for setting the learning outcomes and assessment criteria attached to each outcome and also responsible for the provision of generic grade descriptors that must be contextualised to the assessment set by UKCBC. Assignment briefs are prepared by module leaders, approved by Programme Leaders, reviewed and re-checked by the internal verifier and overseen by the Director of Studies, who acts as the Lead Internal Verifier. There is a robust process of internal verification through which assessors are provided with relevant feedback at the end of each assessment cycle. UKCBC has regular standardisation meetings. It also has access to the Pearson assignment brief checking service and makes regular use of this.

2.62   For its AAT provision, UKCBC has responsibility for the assessment of one module at level 4. All summative assessments are designed and marked by AAT. Students take these summative examinations at UKCBC but under the direct instructions of AAT. The complete process of assessment is exclusively managed by AAT directly, with no involvement of UKCBC. UKCBC is an approved centre for conducting these computer-based tests and UKCBC has a process for the setting and verification of assessments for AAT.

2.63   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation B6 to be met.

2.64   The review team scrutinised assessment documentation, programme handbooks, minutes of the Programme Management and Standardisation Committee, Pearson and AAT guidelines, programme specifications, annual monitoring reports and external verifier reports. Details on assessment were explored through meetings with senior, teaching staff and students. A meeting for the demonstration of the VLE was used to confirm assessment information available to staff and students.

2.65   Students are provided with assignment briefs, issues relating to academic integrity and plagiarism, time management and research methods. They are made aware of the expectations of the assessment process. The Academic Support and Improvements Department further ensures that students are adequately supported in their studies. All students are given written guidelines to grading criteria, usually at the beginning of the semester, and have the opportunity to discuss this verbally with the module tutors. A module planner is prepared by each Programme Leader including the dates of

assessment preparation issue, grading and internal verification processes in respect of summative assessments.

2.66   Students learning and achievement is continuously monitored using formative assessment during the programme. This includes classroom worksheets, presentations, group activities, role play and case studies. Feedback on various assessments is provided at regular intervals in line with each learning outcome. Students expressed satisfaction with feedback and explained how this continuous monitoring is beneficial. The formative assessments are planned and implemented by module lecturers, who provide a continuous informal feedback and support to students alongside the formative assessments that align with the module and learning aims.

2.67   All Pearson summative assessment is internally verified by UKCBC and externally by Pearson verifiers. Summative assignment briefs are designed by UKCBC, internally verified and then approved by the external verifier on an annual basis. Summative assignments are submitted, graded and verified online to the e-learning platform.

2.68   UKCBC 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.

2.69   Assessment marking is regularly sampled by the internal verifier and findings acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness. Grades are recorded on the VLE and Programme Leaders monitor students' performance. Pearson external verifiers conduct annual visits to UKCBC to oversee that the assessments are appropriate. The external verifier reviews and makes suggestions where appropriate. External verifier reports are shared with students through the VLE.

2.70   UKCBC assures itself of the integrity of assessment practice through the Assessment and Standards Board and other committees. Programme Leaders regularly communicate with Pearson external verifiers. 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 verifier.

2.71   Feedback on summative assessment takes up to six weeks. UKCBC has looked at ways of reducing this and aims to reduce this to four weeks. The students with whom the review team met expressed a wish for the turnaround time for feedback to be improved. The review team **recommends** that, by December 2017, UKCBC examine ways of reducing the turnaround time for feedback on summative assessment.

2.72   The review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, and makes effective use of the awarding organisations' 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

2.73   The awarding organisations are responsible for the appointment of external examiners, academic reviewers and external verifiers. Pearson appoint external verifiers/examiners, who monitor that assessment and marking by UKCBC is appropriate to achieve the standard required in the qualification specification. They carry out annual visits and issue action plans detailing issues and actions required.

2.74   Pearson appoints academic reviewers that carry out an annual Academic Management Review, which includes a range of quality assurance monitoring activity. Recommendations from external verifiers/examiners and Academic Management Review are included in UKCBC's self-evaluation document. A recent Pearson review acknowledges that UKCBC takes appropriate management action regarding issues raised.

2.75   AAT externally marks all assessments and therefore are directly responsible for the quality and consistency of marking. All the awarding organisation assessments undergo regular quality assurance. AAT appoints external verifiers to oversee that UKCBC has the capacity and sufficient subject specific resources to deliver their programmes. AAT carry out an annual Quality Management Review and issue external verifiers with recommendations and actions required for UKCBC.

2.76   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation B7 to be met.

2.77   The review team read external verifier/examiner and external review reports and their required actions, recommendations and commentaries on effective practice; UKCBC policies and reports available to students through the VLE; the terms of reference of committees; and committee minutes. The team also met staff and students.

2.78   UKCBC responds to required actions and recommendations from external verifiers and reviewers through the Programme Management and Standardisation Committee. This Committee monitors the action plans teams produce to ensure that required actions and recommendations are carried out, these are also included in the annual programme monitoring and review carried out by the programme teams.

2.79   Reports are monitored throughout UKCBC. The Assessment and Standards Board monitor quality of assessment for each programme and monitor external verifier reports. Both the Programme Management and Standardisation Committee and the Assessment and Standards Board report to the ASQC, which subsequently reports to the Management Committee. External verifier/examiner reports are shared with students through the VLE and students are encouraged to read the reports. External verifier/examiner and reviewer report items are included in UKCBC's self-evaluation document and the Quality Improvement Plan. Pearson annual monitoring reports are positive and highlight many areas of effective practice.

2.80   The review team concludes that Expectation B7 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC reviews and monitors actions and recommendations from external verifier/examiner through the committee structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.81   The procedure for the annual monitoring of programmes is set out in UKCBC Quality Improvement and Enhancement Policy, which is reviewed annually in December. The Quality Manual sets out all of the activities and systems that contribute to the management, review and improvement of quality and support the strategic objectives. A live document summarising all the action plans is shared among the heads of various departments and academic teams to ensure that actions are monitored continuously. The UKCBC Quality Cycle incorporates annual monitoring for each programme, which feeds into Quality Improvement Plan and action plans. The Programme Management and Standardisation Committee also considers the plans and required actions.

2.82   For Pearson, UKCBC is responsible for the annual monitoring of its programmes and for ensuring that appropriate processes are in place to routinely monitor and periodically review its programmes, keeping under constant review all aspects of standards management, quality assurance and day-to-day delivery of the programmes. UKCBC is responsible for engaging with Pearson during periodic review when requested. Pearson has ultimate responsibility for the monitoring and review of its programmes including directing UKCBC to take necessary action as appropriate.

2.83   For AAT, UKCBC is responsible for engaging with AAT during periodic review and must provide AAT with an annual self-assessment, including a review of the previous action plan, resources, organisational management, student support, assessment related quality assurance, management information, and IT security. UKCBC must also ensure appropriate processes are in place to routinely monitor and periodically review the programme, to keep under constant review all aspects of standards management, quality assurance and day-to-day delivery of the programme.

2.84   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation B8 to be met.

2.85   The review team considered relevant documentation including annual monitoring review reports, responsibility checklists, reports from the awarding organisations, external verifier reports, handbooks, and minutes of meetings. Details were discussed in meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

2.86   UKCBC reviews its provision through the completion of annual returns for both Pearson and AAT. These annual returns are monitored by the ASQC to enable UKCBC to ensure that academic standards are being maintained. Action plans are drawn up to ensure that actions are addressed. The action plans are monitored by the senior team of UKCBC. UKCBC has its own annual programme monitoring process that looks particularly at student achievement across programmes, which enables an overview of the extent to which standards are being maintained. The system of Annual Monitoring Review of each programme incorporates comments from external verifiers. There is a clear flow of actions from module review to Annual Programme Monitoring and Review to the Quality Improvement Plan.

2.87   Programme teams are responsible for producing Module Self-Evaluation Documents. The Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development then produces a

UKCBC-wide Quality Improvement Plan. Any actions that are required are then discussed by the Management Committee and implemented in the next academic year. UKCBC's annual programme monitoring process requires reference to qualitative and quantitative data, student and alumni feedback and internal verifier reports. UKCBC reflects on external verifier comments. The report is submitted to and considered by the ASQC for approval. There is an annual Quality Improvement Plan.

2.88   Pearson conducts on-site annual Academic Management Review following a provider self-reflective Annual Programme Monitoring Report. The review reports received from external reviewers and verifiers representing the awarding organisations are discussed in committee meetings and action plans are drawn to implement any recommendations and suggestions made in the reports.

2.89   The annual monitoring and review of programme performance includes the evaluation of levels and trends in student retention, progression and academic outcomes, as well as student feedback and external verifier identification of good practice and recommendations for improvement and action planning.

2.90   The review team concludes that Expectation B8 is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC effectively applies systems and procedures that comply with the awarding organisations' processes for 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

2.91   UKCBC has policies and procedures for complaints and appeals. They are available to students on the VLE, introduced through induction, and cross-referenced through the student handbooks. These include provision for a series of three stages including opportunities for informal resolution, formal consideration and then review of cases by staff with no previous involvement, followed by the right of resort to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). There are timescales for the resolution of cases.

2.92   There is emphasis on local and informal resolution of issues and only one case has been taken to the OIA. Students have the option of taking complaints to Pearson and AAT as appropriate where they have not been resolved internally although they may also proceed directly to the OIA. Students have access to student representatives and a Welfare Officer for some confidential assistance with their cases.

2.93   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation B9 to be met.

2.94   The review team read policy documents and held discussions with staff and students.

2.95   UKCBC has recently introduced, on the VLE, a system to track complaints and other issues raised by students. Students with whom the review team met expressed satisfaction at UKCBC's handling of their feedback and concerns, and of their positive, early impression of the new system.

2.96   UKCBC has oversight of complaints through the Management Committee, although there is no evidence of systematic consideration of cases through that Committee. A log of cases is kept by UKCBC but it does not show the status of complaints nor the timescales within which they have been resolved. However, there are few formal complaints and most are resolved informally.

2.97   The Academic Appeals Policy includes criteria enabling students to appeal against academic judgement on the basis of academic judgement and that students are able to raise such appeals with teaching staff on an informal basis at the first stage. UKCBC confirmed that appeals against judgement are not permissible and the policy would be changed. The informal stage of the process is intended to enable staff to explain assessment outcomes to students but not to change them. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2017, UKCBC revise the Appeals Policy to ensure that academic appeals are not permissible against academic judgement.

2.98   The review team concludes that Expectation B9 is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as, although UKCBC has appeals and complaints procedures in place, the current wording of the Appeals Policy had the potential to compromise academic standards.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.99   This section is not applicable, as UKCBC does not have arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others.

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

2.100   This section is not applicable as UKCBC does not offer research degree programmes.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.102   All applicable Expectations have been met and the risk is judged low in all instances except for one, which is moderate. Three recommendations are made covering three Expectations.

2.103   The recommendations arising from the Expectations indicate the revision of the Appeals Policy to ensure that academic appeals are not permissible against academic judgement; articulating separate admissions appeals and complaints policies; and examining ways of reducing the turnaround time for feedback on summative assessment.

2.104   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at UKCBC **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 UKCBC produces a variety of information relating to learning opportunities and publicises this through a number of means, including the UKCBC website, the internal VLE and printed materials, including the UKCBC prospectus, and programme and student handbooks.

3.2 UKCBC has a Public Information Policy with accompanying procedures that refer to the principles by which documents obtain approval for each category of information, with responsibility for final sign off by the Managing Director.

3.3 Applicants and students receive a range of information through the admissions and induction processes, and through their programme and student handbooks. Web-based information includes accessible descriptions of the programme and structures, admissions requirements and the total cost of fees.

3.4 The student handbook/pack, published on the VLE, includes a wide range of information about the structure of the programmes and fees. There is an introduction to student representation arrangements, complaints and appeals, an induction check list, references to student support services, information about the involvement of students in representation and feedback systems, and UKCBC's mission and strategy.

3.5 The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow Expectation C to be met.

3.6 The review team considered documentation relating to public information, the website, the VLE, programme specifications and handbooks. Details were explored in meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

3.7 Certificates and transcripts of results are the responsibility of the awarding organisations and UKCBC makes clear on its web site the relationship with the awarding organisations.

3.8 There are procedures for the initial sign-off of different types of media to ensure accuracy, and a record is kept of changes and version control of policies. UKCBC is currently seeking to streamline the editorial arrangements for the sign-off of public information.

3.9 The student written submission to this report, and students with whom the review team met, expressed satisfaction overall with the quality of the information they had received.

3.10 Many of UKCBC's policies and procedures are available on the website, including those relating to admissions, although the relationship between the admissions appeals and complaints procedures is not clear, which has led to a recommendation in Expectation B2. There is information to support the transition of students into UKCBC.

3.11   UKCBC has developed its VLE with a dashboard and redesigned unit pages and support to help students monitor their own progress. The site includes access to most of the programme handbooks and programme specifications and many policies and procedures. The minutes of the Student Experience Committee and other meetings are also available, along with external verifiers' reports.

3.12   UKCBC delivers a substantial amount of provision for another college through a sub-contractual arrangement. There is no reference on UKCBC's website that students applying for some programmes may be registered at a different college. Under the arrangement, UKCBC registers students with the awarding organisation and provides the teaching and assessment. At admission, information is given to students about their enrolment with the other college, including offer letters, admission and induction information, as well as other module information, including learner agreements. The learner agreements refer to the rights of students with regard to the other college, but the implications of the relationship with the other college are not sufficiently clear to prospective students and there is no reference to this on UKCBC website. The review team **recommends** that, by December 2017, where students are to be registered with another college, ensure that this information is clearly articulated to prospective students.

3.13   The review team concludes that Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC has appropriate policies and procedures.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.15   The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low. There is one recommendation.

3.16   The recommendation arising from the Expectation indicates that where students are to be registered with another college, UKCBC must ensure that this information is clearly articulated to prospective students.

3.17   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at UKCBC **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   UKCBC's approach to enhancement operates at four levels: governance and strategy, programme delivery, student support, and enrichment of student learning. Oversight of these procedures is by the Director of Quality, Enhancement and Development and the Director of Studies. Findings are then cascaded throughout relevant committees.

4.2   At a strategic level, the Board of Governors has been instrumental in developing and proactively supporting UKCBC. UKCBC aims to secure university partnerships to provide progression to degree programmes for its students and it has aspirations to acquire Taught Degree Awarding Powers. It has taken steps to strengthen its Board of Governors to support this aim and aspiration. Currently, contacts are being made with universities for top-up programmes. Two task groups have been established by the Board: one is concerned with Taught Degree Awarding Powers preparations and the other with improving the annual monitoring process.

4.3   The policies and procedures of UKCBC would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.4   The review team considered documentation relating to external verifying, annual monitoring review reports, the master action plan, and examples of enhancement provided by UKCBC during the review visit. Details were explored in meetings with senior, teaching and support staff, and students.

4.5   UKCBC acknowledges that it has responsibilities to systematically and continuously improve students' learning opportunities and it ensures student representation in its decision-making processes. This includes a plan to extend student representation on its Board of Governors.

4.6   UKCBC operates two methods to capture and evaluate the student experience. Firstly, student surveys are carried out at induction, mid-semester, and end of semester; secondly, in-class teaching observations are used consistently. UKCBC has invested in software to enhance student support. The software records information of student requests, enquiries and complaints. This information is summarised into reports and turned into actions that are monitored as part of routine quality assurance procedures designed to enable feedback.

4.7   The Quality Cycle describes a four-stage process for reviews and planning in every area of UKCBC: Plan, Deliver, Assess and Evaluate. All staff at UKCBC have a role in contributing to the Quality Improvement and Enhancement Policy for annual monitoring.

4.8   The revised committee structure, alongside the practice of collecting and scrutinising data, are steps towards maintaining and consistently providing quality learning and teaching opportunities to all students. Staff are supported in their further and personal development through internal and external training opportunities to include the acquisition of internal verifier qualifications and Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.

4.9   Lecturers are encouraged to participate in forums and meetings and contribute to the improvement of programme delivery, programme content and teaching approaches. These initiatives contribute to further develop the teaching and learning processes by

bringing in new ideas, supported by a clear academic Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. Teaching observations have been made standardised to ensure consistency and standards.

4.10   UKCBC, in response to consultations with student groups and teaching staff initiated block delivery of modules, based on the research inputs provided by the senior management team. The approach has been successful in reducing students' work load and improved student support within the classroom. Also based on student feedback, UKCBC has made changes to the HND in Computing and Systems Development modules to make them more practical rather than theoretical. This is an example where UKCBC is taking deliberate steps to enhance student learning while improving employability skills.

4.11   A new Academic Support and Improvements Department has been established aimed at more closely monitoring student retention and progression, and student support extended. Based upon student feedback, the VLE is in the process of being redeveloped to be more user-friendly for students and with additional features that include links to an e-library.

4.12   Student support has been enhanced through an initiative that sought to reconnect with deferred students to encourage them to complete their programme. Also, a new software application aims to ensure that student enquiries or complaints are handled quickly.

4.13   UKCBC has developed evaluation procedures for the systematic monitoring of enhancement activities to ensure continued fitness for purpose, although such initiatives are not directly and explicitly developed from internal quality assurance monitoring and review processes, and are not recorded explicitly in the master action plan. UKCBC clearly has a culture of continuous improvement and there are examples where student learning opportunities have been enhanced, although it is not clear that these have arisen from a deliberate UKCBC strategic approach. The review team **recommends** that, by December 2017, UKCBC articulate the formal strategy for enhancement.

4.14   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as UKCBC is proactive in its approach to enhancing student learning opportunities, which will be further strengthened by the development of a formal strategy.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.16   The Expectation in this area is met and there is one recommendation.

4.17   The recommendation arising from the Expectation is for UKCBC to articulate the formal strategy for enhancement.

4.18   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at UKCBC **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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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