



Higher Education Review of University College London (UCL)

May 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at University College London (UCL). The review took place from 9 to 12 May 2016 and was conducted by a team of five reviewers, as follows:

- Professor John Baldock
- Dr Douglas Halliday
- Dr Alan Howard
- Mrs Alison Jones
- Mr Abraham Baldry (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

In reviewing UCL the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about University College London

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

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of the awards **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

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

- The clearly articulated approach to embedding research-based learning in all programmes through the Connected Curriculum initiative (Expectation B3).
- The engagement of students as partners in UCL ChangeMakers investigative projects to develop innovative approaches that enhance the quality of their learning opportunities (Expectation B5 and Enhancement).
- The single, institution-wide framework provided by the Doctoral School for facilitating and promoting the quality of the postgraduate research environment (Expectation B11).

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

By December 2016:

- ensure consistent implementation of the policy for Student Staff Consultative Committees (Expectation B5)
- promote greater awareness of, and signposting to, the complaints policy (Expectations B9 and C).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps being taken to develop and implement positively defined learning outcomes for interim/exit awards (Expectation A1).
- The steps being taken to develop, implement and monitor a more responsive and integrated model for personal tutoring (Expectation B4).
- The steps being taken to develop a teaching estate that is fit for purpose (Expectation B4).
- The steps being taken to identify and address persistent assessment and feedback issues through the Annual Student Experience Review (Expectation B6).

Theme: Digital Literacy

The development and support of digital literacy skills among students and staff is a theme that links the UCL 2034 Strategy, the Education Strategy 2016-21 and the recent Connected Curriculum initiative. Staff seeking help in using digital sources and techniques in their

teaching are assisted by an E-Learning Environments (ELE) team, expanded into the Digital Education Team from 2015. Departmental e-learning champions work with ELE to monitor and share experience in using digital media for learning, assessment and feedback. While the integration of digital literacy support and training is not yet a universal part of all programmes and modules, the review team confirms that UCL has developed and implemented strategies that support the development of digital skills among students and staff, and has begun embedding digital learning more widely within the curriculum.

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

About University College London

University College London (UCL) was originally established in 1826 and was one of the two founding colleges of the federal University of London in 1836, of which UCL remains a college. UCL was granted its own degree awarding powers in 2005 and at that time also became known as UCL, rather than the formal title: University College London. In 2012, UCL merged with The School of Pharmacy, University of London and later that year formed a strategic alliance with the Institute of Education. UCL and the Institute of Education merged in 2014 making it the largest higher education institution in London. The total student population for 2015-16 is over 38,000 consisting of 17,640 undergraduates, 14,713 postgraduate taught students and 5,754 postgraduate researcher students.

The main campus is located in Bloomsbury in central London although UCL has a number of sites across London, including a new site in development at Stratford. UCL currently has two small overseas campuses in Qatar (83 students) and Australia (54 students) delivering postgraduate programmes, as well as supporting specialist research activities. This provision is wholly delivered by UCL staff and does not involve educational partnerships, although the nature of these arrangements is in transition at the time of the review. UCL has a number of partnership arrangements, predominantly for the delivery of postgraduate taught and research degrees with approximately 1,000 students registered at partner institutions. The institution is multi-disciplinary with 70 academic departments and units organised into 11 faculties. In addition, faculties are strategically grouped into four schools to facilitate greater interdisciplinary interaction. Central professional services operate across UCL to provide student and staff support functions. University College London Union (UCLU) is the students' union representative body and has a strong working relationship with UCL.

UCL's mission is to be 'London's Global University: a diverse intellectual community, engaged with the wider world and committed to changing it for the better; recognised for our radical and critical thinking and its widespread influence; with an outstanding ability to integrate our education, research, innovation and enterprise for the long-term benefit of humanity'. The mission is supported by a new strategy, UCL 2034, which outlines the vision, ambitions and key success enablers. The strategy is led by the President and Provost as principal academic and administrative officer, who reports to the UCL Council where ultimate responsibility for strategic direction resides. The President and Provost is supported by a senior management team consisting of six Vice-Provosts, Faculty Deans, the Registrar and Professional Services Directors.

Academic Committee, chaired by the President and Provost, is the senior committee responsible for academic matters and it exercises this through oversight of the work of its subcommittees, notably the Education Committee chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) and the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) chaired by the Pro Vice-Provost (Doctoral School). Other subcommittees include: the Student Experience Committee; Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee; Library Committee; and Equal Opportunities Committee. The Academic Committee reports to both UCL Council

and UCL Academic Board. At faculty level, taught degree provision is overseen by Faculty Teaching Committees that report to the Education Committee and oversight of research degrees is undertaken by Faculty Graduate Teaching Committees reporting to RDC. These faculty committees in turn are informed by the work of Departmental Teaching Committees that operate in each department.

Following the merger of UCL and the Institute of Education, a review of all current regulations and procedures was initiated by the Academic Committee, and overseen by the Education Committee and RDC, in order to establish a single definitive point of reference on matters relating to taught and research degree programmes. The academic and regulatory framework was substantially rewritten, including the Qualifications and Credit Framework, the Quality Review Framework and the Academic Partnerships Framework. From the autumn of 2015 the new consolidated UCL Academic Manual was made available from a single portal on the UCL website and provides the key reference point for all academic provision.

The previous QAA review for UCL took the form of an Institutional Audit in 2009. The audit team concluded that confidence could be placed in the management of academic standards and quality and the institution was commended on four aspects of its practice namely: the quality, clarity and accessibility of guidance for staff and students; the Internal Quality Review process for internal periodic review; the Transitions programme that supports new undergraduate students; and the use of research degree logs to record training and progress of research degree students. All these areas continue to feature in UCL's quality assurance processes and the Institution has sustained the benefits from these practices. The audit team made two recommendations which resulted in a detailed action plan produced and overseen by an internal Post Institutional Audit Steering Group which reported progress to the Education Committee on a regular basis. Effective progress has been made on addressing these recommendations, although steps to achieve institutional coherence on regulatory and academic processes, recommended by the audit team, have subsequently been revisited through the substantial review of regulations noted above. Outcomes from the successful QAA Institutional Audits conducted prior to the mergers for the School of Pharmacy (2007) and the Institute of Education (2009) were also acted on appropriately by the institutions at the time.

Explanation of the findings about University College London

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

a) ensure that the requirements of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 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 UCL has in place regulations and procedures governing the design, naming and award of all its degrees, both taught and research, that ensure that threshold academic standards are appropriately set and maintained. All degree titles offered are described in a Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) contained in the Academic Manual which sets out the regulations, policies and procedures leading to the award of UCL credit and qualifications. The qualifications contained in the QCF have been aligned with the qualification descriptors in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

1.2 The Academic Manual prescribes procedures for programme approval to ensure that learning outcomes are considered in terms of their alignment with FHEQ qualification descriptors and are informed by relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Chapter 2 of the Manual also requires consideration of QAA's guidance on the characteristics of undergraduate, master's and foundation degrees. Where necessary, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) level descriptors and requirements are also taken into account during approval and review processes. Together these regulations and procedures applied by the institution would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team tested the approach to the Expectation by examining academic quality regulations for taught and research programmes, guidance relating to programme

development and reports from Programme Module and Approval Panels. The team also met staff and students involved in programme design, assessment and review.

1.4 Following the mergers with the School of Pharmacy and the Institute of Education, UCL has reviewed all relevant academic regulations, frameworks and processes and consolidated these into a comprehensive Academic Manual. Staff met by the team confirmed that the Manual is a consolidation of existing practice and that current programmes are consistent with the new regulations. At the time of the review, some 30 programmes had been either approved or reapproved through the new Programme Module and Approval Panels approach. Over time, the periodic Internal Quality Review process (IQR) will address and explicitly confirm the currency of programmes and the validity of their alignment with external reference points.

1.5 The Academic Manual does not currently provide for intermediate or interim awards to be made where students have not achieved the final award for which they were registered. In the absence of such awards, UCL has tended to award aegrotat (unclassified) awards where students are unlikely to complete the full award, although these are not available within all programmes and concerns have also been raised regarding inconsistency of application. In order to address this situation, UCL has designed a suite of interim awards which are shortly to be approved by the Education Committee, added to the QCF and made available for examination boards to confer. The team therefore **affirms** the steps being taken to develop and implement positively defined learning outcomes for interim/exit awards.

1.6 The review team concludes that the design and delivery of UCL's qualifications make appropriate use of external reference points in setting academic standards and ensuring that qualifications reflect Subject Benchmarks Statements and are consistent with national qualification, credit, and characteristics frameworks. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.7 The Academic Manual sets out the principles, procedures and frameworks that are used to secure academic standards. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), contained within the Manual, defines the range, level, scope and volume of all awards made by UCL. The regulations are implemented using a pyramidal governance structure designed to allow the detailed assurance of standards to take place at points closest to the actual processes of teaching, learning and assessment. Authority for setting and maintaining academic standards rests with the Academic Committee which delegates responsibility for detailed scrutiny of taught programmes to the Education Committee and the Faculty Teaching Committees (FTCs). Responsibility for assuring the standards of research degrees is delegated to the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), with detailed oversight being carried out by Faculty Graduate Teaching Committees (FGTCs). Together, the regulations and governance arrangements are sufficient in principle to ensure that academic standards are appropriately applied in the award of credit and qualifications.

1.8 The team reviewed the academic frameworks and regulations for taught and research programmes and the minutes of committee meetings at institutional and faculty level. The team also met academic and support staff responsible for designing and operating the academic frameworks and regulations.

1.9 Following the merger of UCL and the Institute of Education, academic regulations and procedures were dispersed across a variety of documents and websites and in need of consolidation. A substantial review of the regulatory framework was initiated by the Academic Committee to align the regulations into a single point of reference for staff and students. The regulations have therefore been rewritten and the consolidated Academic Manual became available from a single portal on the UCL website in autumn 2015. As part of the transition arrangements, some Institute of Education programmes continue to operate under pre-merger academic regulations pending further amendments to the Academic Manual.

1.10 Throughout the 2015-16 academic year, the Education Committee has continued to receive and approve revisions to the Manual. At the time of the review, the Assessment Framework for Research Programmes is being further rationalised under the oversight of RDC. A record of additions and amendments to the regulations is available in the UCL Academic Manual Update Log and the Manual is updated annually by the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Subcommittee, which reports to the Education Committee. UCL intends to continue refining the regulations and qualification frameworks in the light of experience in order to maximise consistency of practice across a large institution and to minimise the need for formal derogations from the regulations in particular instances, such as to meet the needs of PSRBs. In particular, it intends to develop more explicit terms of reference for examination boards prescribing the implementation of the regulations. Further enhancements will also be made to the Academic Manual during 2016-17 to reflect QAA guidance on dual and joint awards characteristics, particularly in respect of double degrees. Staff met by the team confirmed their use of the guidance and procedures contained in the Academic Manual for the management of standards and quality.

1.11 The team concludes that UCL has in place accessible and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations, which govern the award of credit and qualifications. Following recent mergers, it is continuing to embed this framework and ensure a consistent approach across the institution. The Expectation is therefore met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.12 Programme specifications are required for all programmes and are confirmed at the point of first validation. Student and Registry Services maintains a programme specifications webpage that provides links to a central repository where all programme specifications are available, ordered by faculty and open to public view. The central repository is amended annually when all specifications that have been subject to significant change are updated. The programme specifications web pages provide guidance on the use of the specifications and on procedures for making changes, together with worked examples at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The Academic Manual describes procedures for the amendment of programmes, learning outcomes and assessment methods. Module descriptors and programme information are also available on the UCL intranet, accessible to all students and staff. Together, the programme specifications repository and the guidance provided in the Academic Manual would allow for the Expectation to be met.

1.13 The review team examined a sample of programme specifications and module descriptors available online and met academic and support staff to discuss how the repository is managed, updated and used.

1.14 The review team confirms that the programme specification template and the repository serve the internal programme approval processes and assist in programme review. Programme specifications are not intended as a source of information for potential applicants or current students, who are guided to the UCL prospectuses, departmental handbooks, programme guides and course outlines available on the institutional website. Most of the programme specifications for the Institute of Education Faculty use the pre-merger format, although these will be aligned with the UCL format when substantial changes are made, or as they are reviewed as part of the current Internal Quality Review process. Academic and professional staff met by the team, together with minutes and documentation describing examination and programme monitoring procedures, confirmed that the programme specifications constituted the fundamental basis upon which teaching and assessment are designed and delivered.

1.15 The review team considers that UCL appropriately maintains and uses definitive records of programmes. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.16 UCL operates a staged approach to programme and module development and approval as outlined in the Academic Manual. Faculties and central governance committees share responsibility for the design and approval of taught and research degrees. Authorisation is required at department, faculty and institutional level. The Education Committee approves new taught programmes and the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) has responsibility for the approval of new research programmes. These are advised by Programme Monitoring and Approval Panels (PMAP) who undertake detailed scrutiny of proposals, considering both the academic and resource implications of proposals. PMAP is drawn from the membership of the Education Committee therefore retaining strategic oversight. Documentary requirements for PMAP comprise an online Programme Institution Questionnaire (PIQ), completed by new programme initiators, which has embedded links to supporting documents. Student and Registry Services is responsible for ensuring that processes are followed and that outcomes are reported through the pyramidal committee structure to the Academic Committee. Faculty Teaching Committees (FTC) approve proposals prior to submission to PMAP and also receive a report at each meeting on new programme approvals, amendments and withdrawals.

1.17 Internal stakeholders provide feedback on the implications of proposed developments as part of the design and approval process. External input is sought at the design stage through the involvement of employers, PSRBs or other sector-specific advisers, and at the faculty approval stage through the formal liaison with independent external scrutineers. UCL involves students in approval as members of PMAPs and student participation is also encouraged at departmental and faculty levels. The design of the process for programme approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team considered a range of documentation pertaining to programme approval, including PIQs, external scrutineer contributions and relevant committee minutes. The team also met staff responsible for the oversight and operation of the processes.

1.19 The Academic Manual provides detailed guidance on the development, approval and amendment of programmes and modules and draws explicitly on the Quality Code to allow appropriate consideration of key frameworks, benchmarks and qualification characteristics. Such reference points are used to inform curriculum design, and completed programme specifications include explicit reference to the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements. Submissions from external scrutineers confirm that learning outcomes are stated at the appropriate level as described in the FHEQ and that assessment is appropriate to the level and credit value of the modules. External scrutineers also comment on the appropriateness of the module title, aims, curriculum scope and currency of reading lists. The terms of reference for PMAP include responsibility for ensuring new and amended programmes are aligned to external requirements, including Subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements, and approval documentation and committee reports demonstrate due consideration of proposals against both internal requirements and national standards. A new online Module Outline Form is now completed for proposed new modules as part of programme approval.

1.20 Overall, the team considers that there are effective processes in place for the approval of taught and research programmes that enable academic standards to be appropriately set. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.21 UCL's regulatory framework for the assessment and examination of undergraduate and taught postgraduate students is set out in the Academic Manual and defines threshold academic standards for each programme area. Programme learning outcomes are presented in each programme specification and learning outcomes are articulated in module descriptors. Processes for internal marking and moderation are also defined in the Academic Manual. An external examiner is appointed to each programme to confirm that assessments enable student achievement to be measured against the intended learning outcomes and that processes for assessment are appropriate. External examiners also review and report on student achievement and confirm that threshold academic standards have been met.

1.22 Credit and qualifications are awarded through formally constituted Boards of Examiners' meetings operated at departmental level. Each faculty appoints a representative to attend and observe departmental Boards to provide regulatory advice and to report to the Faculty Board of Examiners. These in turn report annually to the Quality Review Subcommittee of the Education Committee. The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.23 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing programme specifications, external examiner reports, assessment procedures and minutes of examination boards. The review team also met students and staff, including senior management, support staff and academic staff.

1.24 Standard templates are in place for programme specifications and module descriptors that clearly list the learning outcomes and the associated teaching, learning and assessment methods. Students are generally aware of learning outcomes and the role that these play in assessment, although express relatively low levels of satisfaction with assessment and feedback (see section B6 of this report).

1.25 The UCL Marking Policy in the Academic Manual includes guidelines for internal moderation and second marking of assessments. Staff met by the review team confirmed that support is available to staff involved in assessment processes. The Marking Policy was updated for 2015-16 in response to an external examiner recommendation regarding the practice of changing marks when only a sample of papers had been marked by the moderator. In response to this concern, the Chair of the Education Committee enacted an amendment to the policy which clarifies that any serious concerns raised about a moderation sample must lead to all assessments being second marked before adjustments can be applied. Other external examiners comment positively on improvements to second marking and moderation.

1.26 In addition to internal moderation, external examiners review a representative sample of assessments to judge whether internal marking is of an appropriate standard,

consistent and fair to all students. External examiners attend the relevant Board of Examiners' meetings and write an annual report providing commentary on implementation processes for the award of credit. Reports reviewed by the team confirm that both UK threshold standards and UCL's own academic standards are satisfied through the assessment process. Faculty Board of Examiners, and ongoing liaison through Faculty Tutors, provide effective mechanisms for the oversight of the departmental administration of assessment procedures. Faculty and Programme Boards of Examiners operate effectively according to established processes but have not had formal institutionally agreed terms of reference. However, terms of reference are currently in the process of being established and approved.

1.27 Overall, the team considers that effective regulations and processes exist in respect of the award of credit and maintenance of academic standards, which are implemented appropriately. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.28 The processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are set out in the Quality Review Framework section of the Academic Manual and overseen by the Quality Review Subcommittee (QRSC) on behalf of the Education Committee and the Research Degree Committee (RDC). This Framework integrates the key processes for monitoring standards, the student experience and strategic quality enhancement activities, including external examining, the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) process, Augmented Annual Monitoring of programmes on a five-yearly basis and the programme of periodic Internal Quality Reviews (IQR) undertaken at departmental level on a six-yearly basis. Other component parts of the framework for monitoring include Peer Dialogue, Staff Student Consultative Committees and student representation on academic committees and panels. The design of the processes in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.29 The review team considered a range of programme monitoring and review documentation for taught programmes and research degrees and met staff responsible for the oversight and operation of the processes to discuss the approach.

1.30 The review team found that the Quality Review Framework clearly links the processes for monitoring and review to the maintenance of academic standards and defines how this is achieved through the QRSC, ASER and IQR.

1.31 The system of annual monitoring for taught programmes was replaced in 2015-16 with a more comprehensive ASER process, the purpose of which is to integrate monitoring activities undertaken during the year into an annual health check exercise. The ASER process uses enhanced data sets that provide a holistic view of the management of academic standards and the student experience. Statistics on student performance and external examiner feedback are a key part of this data source. Departments and faculties are responsible for analysing departmental data sets, monitoring subsequent action plans and identifying and disseminating good practice.

1.32 Review committee reports demonstrate consideration of proposals against internal requirements and national standards. The Development and Enhancement Plans are considered by the Department Teaching Committee (DTC) and approved by the Faculty Teaching Committee (FTC). The process is effectively driven and overseen by QRSC which also analyses data sets in order to mandate actions in advance, and also receives, considers and disseminates outcomes and good practice from the ASER process. QRSC further triangulates trends and themes within external examiner comments with those emerging from student data and feedback in order to identify risks to academic standards. ASER reports are published to staff and students and also available to external examiners.

1.33 The Internal Quality Review process (IQR) supplements the ASER process through a six-yearly review of each department's management of its quality assurance processes and structures against the Academic Manual. The process involves a panel of peers, including an external reviewer and student reviewer, analysing documentation and meeting departmental staff and students. IQR reports and detailed action plans are submitted for

discussion to the DTC and FTC and signed off by the IQR team. An institutional IQR panel then scrutinises progress against the action plan after the first and second years and reports to QRSC. Furthermore, an annual report summarising the outcomes from the year's IQR programme is submitted to QRSC for formal approval and areas of good practice are referred to the Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching for wider dissemination and implementation. Recommendations concerning research student issues arising from IQR during the previous session are reported separately to the Research Degrees Committee.

1.34 Overall, the team considers that the processes in place for the monitoring and review of programmes enable UCL to implement a consistent approach to ensuring academic standards are set and maintained. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.35 UCL seeks to ensure independent and expert input into the setting and maintenance of the standards of all its qualifications. External examiners are appointed for all subject areas and modules to ensure that academic standards are set at the correct level and that student opportunities to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes are appropriate. As noted in section A3.1, use is made of external scrutineers in new programme approval and external experts participate in periodic Internal Quality Review (IQR). A number of programme areas are subject to additional external scrutiny to confirm compliance with professional criteria and/or competencies as part of PSRB approval. The design of the processes for engaging external and independent expertise would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.36 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing the relevant sections of the Academic Manual, external examiner reports, external scrutineer comments and IQR reports, and met staff, including faculty tutors and departmental academic staff.

1.37 The Academic Manual clearly describes the requirements for the use of external and independent expertise in different areas of activity and this has recently been reviewed and revised to confirm alignment with the Quality Code. Clear criteria are provided and used in the selection of external examiners, IQR external members and external scrutineers to ensure that those appointed have sufficient independent experience and expertise. External industry expertise is used, including through PSRB accreditation processes, although this is usually more concerned with curriculum and content than academic standards. IQR panels include an external quality expert, although an ongoing internal review of IQR proposes to require external input by a subject specialist as well as through an external quality expert.

1.38 Feedback provided by external scrutineers on new programme proposals has consisted to date of email comments, although a new template has been developed in order to obtain more consistent feedback. External examiners use a new standard template for report writing and this facilitates provision of structured feedback on academic standards and quality including the explicit confirmation of adherence to national frameworks. External examiners may categorise recommendations to enable prioritisation of actions at the appropriate level within the institution. 'Essential' recommendations are responded to directly by the Vice Provost (Education and Student Affairs) and the review team saw evidence of this working well in practice. Key issues and good practice identified in external examiner reports are collated into an annual report that is considered at institutional level through the Education Committee.

1.39 Overall, the team considers that UCL appropriately uses external expertise in programme development, review and ongoing maintenance of academic standards. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.41 The review team considers that UCL has appropriate policies and procedures in place for ensuring that academic standards are set at a level that is consistent with UK threshold expectations and with internally set academic standards. The academic and regulatory frameworks are comprehensive in scope and have recently been consolidated to promote greater alignment and standardisation of practice across the Institution. This review of the framework for quality assurance and enhancement is ongoing and the team affirms the steps being taken to introduce positively defined learning outcomes for intermediate awards. UCL makes good use of external input into both the setting of academic standards and in ensuring that such standards are maintained in practice.

1.42 The review team therefore concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at UCL **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 UCL operates a staged approach to programme and module development and approval as outlined in the Academic Manual, which requires scrutiny at departmental, faculty and institutional level. The process for new programmes is described in more detail in section A3.1 of this report (see paragraphs 1.16-1.17) and involves detailed scrutiny of a Programme Institution Questionnaire (PIQ) to a Programme Monitoring and Approval Panel (PMAP) convened at institutional level. Amendment to an existing programme is undertaken through completion of a Programme Amendment Questionnaire (PAQ) which is reviewed by the Chair of PMAP, prior to submission and approval to a PMAP meeting for noting or full scrutiny as appropriate. There is a formal requirement that current students must be consulted regarding any amendments that affect their programme.

2.2 Programmes involving academic partnerships are subject to the same approval processes, although an initial strategic endorsement is required for the partnership as well as department and faculty approval for the partnership proposal. The partnership approval process may be run concurrently with the programme development and approval depending upon the nature of the partnership. The partner approval process has been developed in parallel with the Global Engagement Strategy and Global Partnership Governance Framework to ensure alignment with strategic aims as well as maintaining academic standards and quality of student experience.

2.3 UCL supports staff contribution to programme and module design, development and approval through the Academic Manual, online Teaching and Learning portal, Digital Education Teams and through the work of the Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching (CALT). The processes in place for the design and approval of programmes outlined above and in section A3.1 would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.4 The review team tested the effectiveness of the approach through discussions with staff and students. The review team also considered a range of documentary sources, including policy documents, committee minutes and programme approval documents for taught and research degrees.

2.5 The Academic Manual provides clear and detailed guidance, with embedded links to relevant forms and online processes for the submission of documentation. Documentary requirements for PMAP are comprehensive and the online PIQ includes links to the supporting programme specifications, notional programme information, costings, business case, market research and new module proposal form. UCL Arena provides continuing professional development for programme and course design, and UCLU and Academic Services provide briefings for staff and students involved in programme approval processes. Staff met by the team confirmed that they were well supported throughout the process at all levels. UCLU representatives confirm that sabbatical officers involved in the PMAP process had worked closely with staff to allow them to make a full and effective contribution. Further proposed enhancements to the process include a new institutional planning process for

faculties, including market research, and separate consideration of the academic and business cases.

2.6 The current governance arrangements are relatively new arising from a restructure of committees. PMAP has therefore been operational from September 2015 replacing the former Programme and Module Approval Steering Group. The new PMAP process allows for more meetings during the year which are published in advance, providing flexibility for additional follow-up meetings as required. As part of the revised arrangements, the role of the external scrutineer has been enhanced at institutional level through the introduction of a standardised form for completion. Continuous improvement of the programme approval process will be sought through an annual meeting of PMAP members, the first meeting of which will take place at the end of the academic year and will include students. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme approval processes is also facilitated through the Internal Quality Review process with issues being referred to the Quality Review Subcommittee for consideration to enact improvements at institutional, faculty and department level.

2.7 Greater clarity on how market research is conducted for PIQ has been highlighted by students as an area for development, suggesting use of the opinions of prospective/current students and alumni. The review team was advised that staff are encouraged to consult with students, alumni and employers as part of programme design and development but that there is no formal requirement. However, The Student Recruitment and Marketing directorate reviews sector data on the likely size of the market, based on empirical data and information on trends, and provides analysis to departments prior to faculty approval.

2.8 Overall, the review team consider that the processes for programme design, development and approval are effective and are systematically and consistently applied. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.9 The Academic Manual sets out institutional regulations for the recruitment, selection and admission of students and is made available to internal and external audiences on UCL's website. Admission processes are overseen by the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee (StRAFC) which reports to Academic Committee. StRAFC is chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) and has membership that includes the Director of Access and Administration, the Director of Financial Planning, members of faculty and representatives from UCLU. The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.10 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing relevant sections of the Academic Manual and selection criteria templates, and met staff with responsibilities for admissions. The review team also met a range of students to discuss their experience of the recruitment and admissions process.

2.11 The Admissions Policy is overseen by StRAFC, which ensures alignment of the policy with the UCL strategic plan. Admissions decisions are administered centrally, with the exception of two faculties, which are closely monitored to ensure consistency of approach across the Institution. Admission decisions are processed and verified systematically with reference to agreed selection criteria templates and to named Faculty Admissions Tutors where further advice is required. Students met by the team were generally positive about their experience of the admissions process, although some commented about the lack of diversity in the intake. The Institution makes use of contextual admissions policies, and undertakes a range of widening access work, including foundation programmes and outreach activity.

2.12 Information for prospective students about open days, how to apply and admission requirements is available on the UCL website. Entry requirements are transparent and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure consistency of approach. Students have recourse to an appeals process for admissions decisions although numbers are low with only one appeal received last year. Although there is a portal and newsfeed for communication with students throughout the admissions process, and students have a named contact, students met by the team reported varying levels of communication from UCL in the period between offer acceptance and enrolment. Although this was not an issue for undergraduate students, postgraduate students reported considerable variability between faculties in the level of communication prior to entry.

2.13 StRAFC has reporting mechanisms into the deliberative committee structure through the Academic Committee. In addition, regular reports on admissions and recruitment are presented to the senior management team. UCL monitors and reviews the admissions policy and procedure annually and also monitors the entry requirements regularly through the Admissions Requirements Panel. Recent expansion in student numbers has had an impact on the students' academic experience and UCL has introduced processes for greater strategic oversight and monitoring of the number of students admitted to control growth

(see section B4). This includes marrying up the recruitment and estates functions and the appointment of a new Director of Strategic Planning.

2.14 Overall, the review team considers that UCL has recruitment, selection and admission policies which are transparent, reliable and valid, and are underpinned by organisational structures and processes that are generally effective. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.15 The Education Strategy sets out UCL's strategic approach to learning and teaching; its stated aim is to have all aspects of the student experience outstanding. The Strategy was approved in March 2016 with progress to be monitored through a new Education Strategy Implementation Group chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs). The Connected Curriculum initiative is described as UCL's flagship education initiative and aims to link education and research at UCL and embed research-based education across all of UCL's taught programmes. Support and professional development opportunities for academic staff are provided by the Centre for Advancing Learning and Teaching (CALT) through the UCL Arena staff development programme and a programme of Peer Dialogue and regular development opportunities.

2.16 The Education Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing education strategy, policy and procedure in respect of UCL's taught students on behalf of the Academic Committee. Its work is supported by Faculty Teaching Committees (FTC) which also act as links with Department Teaching Committees (DTC). Student engagement in learning and teaching is facilitated by student representative membership of institutional, faculty and departmental committees.

2.17 The Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) allows progress against the strategic objectives to be monitored through consideration of a wide range of statistical data. The Internal Quality Review (IQR) also provides a central evaluation of academic quality management and enhancement on a six-yearly cycle. Outcomes from these processes feed into the Education Committee. The framework for learning opportunities and teaching practices is based on a strategic approach requiring regular review against progress. The design of the framework would therefore enables the Expectation to be met.

2.18 The review team considered a range of documents related to learning and teaching and met student representatives and members of the wider student body. The team also discussed learning and teaching with a range of staff across the Institution.

2.19 The President and Provost outlines a strong commitment to excellence in learning and teaching and improving the student experience, and the Education Strategy is intended to ensure that teaching and research have equal parity. The Connected Curriculum initiative is a key element of the Strategy and clearly sets out the expectations for research-based learning and teaching in all taught programmes. A working group is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the new Strategy and although it has yet to meet formally, the team noted a thorough framework for determining progress against each strategic objective which will facilitate effective monitoring.

2.20 Wide-ranging evidence from the ASER review process demonstrates that this mechanism is used to successfully monitor and analyse learning and teaching activity in academic departments and to generate enhancements. Staff met by the team confirmed widespread awareness of the new ASER process, its aims and how the process is designed to improve the student experience in academic departments. FTCs and DTCs operate

effectively in monitoring, although the team noted widespread awareness of the relatively low levels of satisfaction with assessment and feedback in meetings and in committee minutes. There is broad recognition among staff and students of the need to improve performance in this area to support student learning and a programme of work is underway (see section B6 of this report).

2.21 CALT has made wide-ranging and significant contributions to initiatives designed to enhance the student experience. These include: restructuring of the training programme for doctoral supervision; support for an Institution-wide framework of peer observation; support at departmental level for subject areas; a network of nine teaching fellows linked to a faculty and FTCs whose role includes the dissemination of good practice from IQR reports; and curriculum design support for programme leaders.

2.22 CALT is responsible for the staff development programme UCL Arena which promotes enhancements in learning and teaching through professional development courses and workshops. CALT uses peer review support and pedagogic research to inform its approach. The Arena Two programme is a formal requirement for probationary staff who need to achieve Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) status. Arena One develops postgraduate teaching assistants for accreditation as Associate Fellows of the HEA. In addition, Arena Open offers support for any staff interested in curriculum development topics. The team noted that the UCL Arena Exchange seminar series, led predominantly by academics sharing their own good practice, highlights essential components of enhancing student learning. All staff are required to undergo annual appraisal and to undertake three professional development events per year. Peer observation is also undertaken on an annual basis in a scheme overseen by CALT. Academic staff met by the team were able to verify the operation of these schemes as described and related how their approaches to learning and teaching had been informed and enhanced through the Arena programme.

2.23 The Connected Curriculum initiative is an Institution-wide project launched in September 2014 which seeks to embed research-based learning across all UCL degree programmes by integrating research and education into the wider student experience. The core tenet of this initiative is that students learn through research and enquiry. The Connected Curriculum is expressed through an innovative framework developed by CALT to articulate the different ways in which research and teaching are connected. The team found that the ethos of Connected Curriculum informs all aspects of learning and teaching at UCL and is embedded in the Arena staff development programme. Academic and support staff whom the team met demonstrated widespread awareness and a clear vision of the Connected Curriculum initiative, citing examples of approaches to learning and teaching which demonstrate a variety of good contextual practice to embedding research-based learning into curricula in different faculties. Students who met the team had limited awareness of this initiative, although some examples of research-based teaching were described by students. A Liberating the Curriculum Working Group has been set up as part of the Connected Curriculum programme which aims to ensure that curricula in all programmes reflect the diversity of the student body. This group has undertaken some effective work to date and produced resources to support staff in facilitating greater diversity in the curriculum. Conferences for teaching and administrative staff also serve to disseminate good practice in this area and there is also an annual teaching conference organised by UCLU. The review team therefore considers that the clearly articulated approach to embedding research-based learning in all programmes through the Connected Curriculum initiative is **good practice**.

2.24 The team consider that UCL has a clearly articulated strategic approach to learning and teaching supported by a wide-ranging and effective programme of staff development. The Connected Curriculum framework provides an effective structure to facilitate research-

based teaching with a strong lead on this provided by CALT. The team noted shortcomings in providing assessment feedback that the Institution is seeking to address. Overall, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.25 The UCL 2034 Strategy articulates a commitment to student development and achievement which is supported by the Education Strategy and Doctoral Education Strategy. UCL has institution-wide initiatives in place to deliver the strategy objectives and student achievement is supported by a wide range of academic and support services. Student development is coordinated by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) who chairs both the Education Committee and the Student Experience Committee (StEC). The Institution gathers information annually on the student experience through the Student Barometer and reports are evaluated by StEC which reports to the Education Committee. Annual monitoring and periodic review processes also monitor arrangements and resources, particularly through the enhanced data set facilitated by the new Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) approach. UCL has a stated commitment to partnership working with UCLU to ensure student views are heard and is committed to equality for all students, with an accountability framework managed by the senior team. A Code of Conduct sets out expectations of students. The design of the approach would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.26 The team considered a range of information from student surveys, committee minutes and policy documents that pertain to the provision and monitoring of resources and support. In addition, the team met different groups of students, student representatives and a range of academic and professional support staff to explore the institutional approach.

2.27 The ASER process monitors a broad range of data on student attainment, including information on destinations of leavers and on equality and diversity issues in the taught curriculum. Comprehensive data sets are discussed at StEC and the Education Committee with evidence of issues being identified, such as work on investigating the attainment of BME students which the Institution is continuing to monitor and review. Evidence available to the team demonstrates that monitoring of student achievement data also occurs at departmental level with discussion of issues being held at departmental Staff Student Consultative Committees. Student engagement on issues related to student learning and achievement is also evident in some of the UCL ChangeMakers initiatives (see section B5 of this report).

2.28 The UCL Transitions programme is designed to support new undergraduate students and uses students in later years of study as mentors to new first year entrants. The objectives of the scheme are to provide peer support through regular group mentoring meetings and peer assisted learning sessions. Informative and effective resources are produced to support this process and there is evidence of good levels of engagement with the programme. Students who met the team were positive about the benefits of this activity both as mentors and mentees.

2.29 All UCL students have access to a personal tutor whose role is to provide academic support and guidance, and to help students engage with the academic community. Students' experience of the operation of the scheme is highly variable with some students describing personal tutors as helpful, while others having little or no contact, or stating a lack of clarity about the role. Staff met by the team were in general agreement with the views expressed by students and a recent review of the personal tutoring system has been undertaken by CALT. The review has resulted in a proposal to reinvigorate the personal tutor system by

positioning it within the Connected Curriculum initiative, thereby giving a greater research-based education focus for personal tutors. The team concludes that this development has the potential to have a positive impact on the efficacy of the personal tutor system and therefore **affirms** the steps being taken to develop, implement and monitor a more responsive and integrated model for personal tutoring.

2.30 Students with specific individual needs are monitored and supported in a variety of ways, including through the Student Support and Wellbeing department which operates in close liaison with academic departments. Those with individual needs can receive support from the Disability Service and Student Psychological Services. A policy framework around fitness to study ensures that students are informed about their obligations. Good support for equality and diversity issues is included in the UCL Arena staff development programme. Specific groups are targeted with support in light of data analysis. Equality reports are considered by the Academic Committee and the team considers that UCL's stated commitment to equality is being actioned and monitored appropriately.

2.31 Wider skills development is a key element of the Education Strategy and resources are provided through a variety of routes, including the UCL Transitions scheme, the Library, the Careers service, IT infrastructure and the virtual learning environment. Departments also provide a range of context-specific support. Support provided to students by UCL Careers is wide ranging, including a strong focus on entrepreneurship through the UCL Advances programme, although awareness of the entrepreneurship training among the students who met the team was low. The Careers service works with academic departments to provide bespoke support and embed approaches in academic programmes. A number of students met supported this as an effective approach to careers support. Students are also positive about the learning support and resources provided through the Library and through the virtual learning environment, although are more critical about IT support and infrastructure which, in their view, was in need of updating. The team learned that IT provision was being enhanced to meet the changing needs of students.

2.32 Pressure on physical space is a significant issue of concern for staff and students and has been exacerbated by a period of significant growth in student numbers over the last five years. Growth in student numbers has been largely organic, driven by demand from academic departments, although some growth is the result of recent mergers. The Education Strategy has a specific objective 'to create a teaching estate that is fit for purpose' and work is being undertaken to address the situation. The Institution has an Estates Strategy and Capital Investment Programme which aim to establish more learning spaces and a better social environment for students. Mechanisms are now in place to manage future growth with a strategic link between student planning and space planning functions. The team also noted some short-term measures to alleviate pressure on space, including temporary teaching spaces, careful optimisation of timetabling and repurposing facilities. However, the team concludes that a systematic, coordinated and long-term approach is required to address the significant pressures on space which impact on almost all aspects of the student learning experience. The team regards the estates development being planned for Stratford as a welcome contribution in this area. The Learning Spaces Programme Board, chaired by the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs), includes student members and provides a forum for student input into these developments. The team welcomes the widespread and coordinated activity to address this issue and **affirms** the steps being taken to develop a teaching estate that is fit for purpose.

2.33 The team considers that the Institution articulates a strong commitment to student achievement and has clear strategy and policy frameworks to support its aims. While there are examples of effective student support in a number of areas, the team affirms two areas of ongoing activity, one of which relates to systemic space issues which restricts the

Institution's ability to support student development and achievement. The review team therefore concludes that although the Expectation is met, the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.34 A commitment to engaging students in the quality and enhancement of their learning experience is included in the UCL 2034 Strategy and the Education Strategy. Details on the provisions for student representation are outlined in the Academic Manual. The primary student engagement initiative is the Student Academic Representatives (StARs) scheme, operated as a partnership between UCL and UCLU, for enabling elected student representation at departmental and faculty level. Students are also represented on most institutional-level committees, including the Academic Board, the Education Committee, the Research Degree Committee and the Student Experience Committee (StEC), the latter of which specifically monitors the student experience and provides a strategic interface between students and senior managers across academic and professional services. Student engagement is also facilitated through participation in Student Staff Consultative Committees (SSCC), a range of surveys and questionnaires, ASER and IQR processes, consultations and focus groups, open forums and through student participation in change projects. The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.35 The team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing relevant documentation pertaining to student engagement. The team also met a range of staff and students across the Institute, including UCLU officers and students acting as StARs.

2.36 UCLU is the representative Student Union body for all UCL students. UCLU sabbatical officers meet the President and Provost on a bi-monthly basis and are represented on most institutional-level deliberative committees, including UCL Council and the Academic Board. Students are not represented on the Estates Management Committee. StEC reports directly to the Academic Committee and provides a forum for staff and student representatives to discuss the student experience. StEC maintains a risk register on non-academic elements of the student experience, and supports the Vice Provost (Education and Student Affairs) to develop Institution-wide plans to enhance the student experience. Discussions are detailed and there is evidence that reporting and assessing risk through a regularly updated risk register is effective. In general, student attendance of committee meetings is good although levels of participation are difficult to gauge from minutes. Students also act as panel members for Internal Quality Reviews and make meaningful contributions to this process.

2.37 The StARs scheme is managed jointly by UCL and UCLU, overseen by a joint steering group and reporting annually to the Education Committee and StEC. StARs are elected to represent students' views and receive training on their role. The primary way in which StARs engage is through SSCCs, which take place at department level as a forum for discussion between student representatives and staff. Faculty StARs are appointed to attend Faculty Teaching committees. The review team noted considerable variability across departments and faculties in levels of engagement and while many departments engage with the StARs scheme effectively, the number of StARs per student varies significantly across faculties, as does attendance at some SSCCs. A number of StARs report a lack of say in how their departments are run. In other cases, StARs report that while they had the ability to effect minor changes, there was little movement on issues of greater significance. There is variability in practice in the SSCCs, and in the quality and clarity of the minutes and actions. In particular, the review team noted that not all required SSCCs were taking place and that discussion of external examiner reports at SSCCs was not evident from minutes or from the

accounts of StARs met by the team. Although the occurrence of meetings is monitored, there are currently not processes or structures in place to ensure that all meetings take place. This presents a risk that students within the year may not have the opportunity to have their collective voice heard in this forum. The review team therefore **recommends** that UCL ensures consistent implementation of the policy for SSSCs.

2.38 The National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes are discussed at a wide range of committees throughout the Institution. In addition to the NSS, UCL uses a number of internal surveys, including the Student Barometer, Postgraduate Research Student Experience (PRES) and, from spring 2016, the Postgraduate Taught Student Experience Survey (PTES). Student Evaluation Questionnaires (SEQs) are also used to collect feedback on modules and programmes, and the results inform the work of the SSCs and other institutional and faculty committees, as well as feeding into the ASER and the IQR processes. SEQs are not standardised, which can make cross-institutional comparisons difficult, however UCL is in the process of moving towards an online centralised SEQ system which will make it easier to analyse results. On the whole, UCL's approach to collecting feedback through surveys is well constructed.

2.39 The MyUCL and UCLU communication channels are used to notify students on changes made in response to feedback and, in addition, academic departments are encouraged to keep the student body well informed of changes. Students met by the review team, however, demonstrated low levels of awareness on changes that had been introduced as a result of student engagement. The review team noted a variety of approaches which are used to inform students about changes that have been introduced as a result of student feedback, including social media, newsletters and notices on the VLE, although the team did not see evidence of a system for sharing best practice in feedback approaches.

2.40 Additional opportunities for student engagement are provided through the UCL ChangeMakers initiative coordinated by the Head of Student Engagement. This initiative was set up in 2014 to enable students to identify and make recommendations to improve their learning, based on a research and critical thinking approach. Projects can be initiated by either staff or students, and of the 60 projects to date, the review team was informed that around half had been proposed by students. Students met by the team demonstrated an awareness of projects underway. The range of projects undertaken through the initiative is diverse and details of the projects are published on the website and shared through a student-led lecture series. The ChangeMakers approach develops innovative approaches that enhance the quality of student learning opportunities and the engagement of students as partners in these investigative projects is **good practice**.

2.41 Overall, the review team considers that the Institution takes deliberate steps to engage all students as partners in their educational experience and that the processes operate effectively. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.42 The UCL Education Committee and its subcommittees monitor and review the implementation of UCL strategy, policy and procedure in respect of matters relating to the assessment of taught students. The institutional regulations, policies and procedures for the management of assessment are outlined in the Academic Manual made available on the UCL website to students, staff, examiners and other stakeholders. The Manual includes policies and guides on marking and moderation, service standards on feedback, examination guides, academic misconduct and assessment in languages other than English. During 2014-15, UCL developed new regulations for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) as part of the new Qualifications and Credit Framework. The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.43 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing policies relating to assessment, external examiner reports and responses and met a range of senior, academic and professional staff. The team also met both undergraduate and postgraduate students to discuss their experience of assessment.

2.44 The Academic Manual includes clear policies and guides concerned with assessment and feedback, including a marking policy (updated for 2015-16) which articulates requirements for internal moderation and second marking of assessments. The documentation provides an entirely sound basis for the operating of equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment.

2.45 Overall student satisfaction with assessment and feedback at UCL is below the sector average and senior staff acknowledge that, while pockets of good practice exist, assessment and feedback is a weakness in some areas of provision. Students describe inconsistent practice in the use of assessment criteria and in the provision of useful and timely feedback, and suggest there is sometimes a lack of diversity in the range of assessment types used. Student comments on quality of feedback are echoed by some external examiners and problems with assessment and feedback are regularly discussed at Faculty and Departmental Teaching Committee meetings. A 2011 UCLU-produced assessment and feedback campaign report demonstrates that student concerns are not new on this matter. Institutional initiatives have been introduced such as the production of level-by-level assessment criteria guides, the production of case studies for staff on improving assessment and feedback and the support of Centre for Advanced Learning and Teaching (CALT) staff in designing appropriate assessment, although these are yet to impact on NSS scores in this category.

2.46 Addressing and resolving the persistent challenges of assessment and feedback is part of UCL's Education Strategy and staff at all levels express the need for concerted action and a change in culture to improve practice and student satisfaction in this area. As such, the review team notes that assessment and feedback is the theme of the 2015-16 Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) and a series of mandated actions were also required of all departments. Departments are required to reflect on current assessment practice, produce an evaluative report and take steps to ensure the use of clear assessment and

marking criteria and the timely return of feedback. To support this process and to inform their ASER development and enhancement plan, departments have evaluated current practice against the NUS Assessment and Feedback Benchmarking Tool. For departments with low NSS performance on assessment and feedback in recent years, an ASER intensive process has been implemented involving a departmental visit from the President and Provost and the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs), followed by regular monthly follow-ups with the department and a quarterly update provided for the senior management team by the respective Dean. Improvements in assessment and feedback practice are expected to show through in terms of student satisfaction but currently no explicit NSS key performance indicator is set for this area. Although the Institution is aware of the issue and has adopted a number of strategies for improvement, to date these have had limited impact on student perceptions of the quality of assessment and feedback. The review team therefore **affirms** the institutional approach to addressing assessment and feedback issues through the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) Intensive process.

2.47 Sound processes exist for supporting students with special needs and extenuating circumstances. Students are supported to develop good academic practice through self-study materials available on the virtual learning environment and students have access to plagiarism-detection software as a formative evaluative tool. Work is marked anonymously and departments follow guidelines on marking and moderation processes. External examiners attend Board of Examiners meetings and annual reports confirm that assessment processes are generally sound and that student achievement is in accordance with both UK threshold standards and UCL's own academic standards. The Quality Review Subcommittee (QRSC) has overall responsibility for monitoring external examiner recommendations and ensuring that departments respond appropriately.

2.48 Derogations from formal assessment regulations allow disciplines such as education, medicine and dentistry to adhere to specific accreditation requirements. The number and complexity of derogations in place has been reduced through the 2014-15 review of the regulatory framework, although further refinement is being discussed during the current academic year to create greater alignment of the assessment regulation framework for taught programmes.

2.49 Overall, the team considers that UCL has equitable, valid and reliable processes for assessment that allow students to demonstrate the extent to which they achieve the learning outcomes. Although quality assurance procedures are broadly adequate, there are some shortcomings in the rigour with which they are applied, leading to persistent weaknesses in the quality of learning opportunities regarding assessment and feedback. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met but the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.50 External examiners are appointed for all programmes leading to a higher education qualification at UCL. The Academic Manual describes the criteria for appointment, responsibilities and entitlements of external examiners. External examiners review a representative sample of assessments to judge whether internal marking is of an appropriate standard, consistent and fair to all students. Examiners attend the Board of Examiners for their respective programmes and modules and sign off the records of ratified marks, progression and classification of any awards made. An annual report is submitted to UCL and a formal response is produced, normally by the programme team. Reports and responses are published for staff and student access on UCL's student information system and are used as evidence in the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) and Internal Quality Review (IQR) processes. External examiners also provide input into the design and approval of new modules. The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.51 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing relevant policies and documentation relating to external examiner reports and responses and discussed the role of external examiners with a range of staff and students.

2.52 External examiner nomination and appointment processes operate effectively to ensure competence and to avoid conflicts. External examiners are provided with information required to perform their duties, including UCL regulations and procedures and materials relating to the modules being reviewed. An annual development day for external examiners held in the Institute of Education faculty received positive feedback and UCL is considering implementation across the Institution. External examiners usually visit the Institution for two days to review student work and to attend the Board of Examiners. External examiners do not routinely moderate or assess work but may be asked to review borderline or difficult cases in order to inform their report on the maintenance of standards.

2.53 External examiner reports are consistent in style and provide appropriate opportunity to comment on academic standards of programme, to record their experiences in fulfilling the role and to make recommendations. Following updates to the process during 2014-15 external examiners may now prioritise their recommendations as 'essential', 'advisable' or 'desirable' according to importance. A robust process exists for monitoring external examiner reports and coordinating timely responses. A subgroup of the Education Committee reviews every report received and those containing essential recommendations are immediately brought to the attention of the Vice-Provost (Education and Student Affairs) as Chair of the Education Committee for consideration before being relayed to the programme team for a formal response. The Chair then approves the programme team's response and proposed action plan. In one case, an advisable recommendation regarding provision of marking criteria was upgraded by the subgroup as the same concern had been raised in two previous reports. In formulating the formal response, the department is encouraged to consult the Faculty Tutor and students.

2.54 External examiner feedback is routinely considered in annual (ASER) and periodic (IQR) programme review. Annual summary reports including key issues and good practice are considered at faculty level and reported to the Quality Review Subcommittee and the Education Committee. This provides a mechanism through which enhancement initiatives may be identified. Only in the last academic year have external examiner reports been made

available to all students and awareness is currently low, including among some student representatives.

2.55 Overall, the review team concludes that the external examiner system operates effectively and there are processes to ensure reports are considered by key deliberative committees thereby facilitating enhancement of the student experience. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.56 The processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are set out in the Quality Review Framework section of the Academic Manual and overseen by the Quality Review Sub Committee (QRSC) on behalf of the Education Committee and the Research Degree Committee (RDC). As described in section A3.3 of this report, key components include the Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) and periodic Internal Quality Reviews (IQR) undertaken at departmental level on a six-yearly basis. Student involvement is achieved through membership of IQR teams and contributions to the ASER process through Student Evaluation Questionnaires, Staff Student Consultative Committees (SSCC) and involvement in the development of the ASER Development and Enhancement Plan. Peer observation and dialogue supported by CALT is also used to inform programme monitoring and review processes. Processes for managing and monitoring discontinuing academic provision are also in place and outlined in the Academic Manual. The design of the processes in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.57 The review team tested the effectiveness of the approach through discussions with academic and support staff and with students. The review team also considered a range of documentary sources including policy documents, committee minutes and monitoring and review documents relating to taught and research degrees.

2.58 IQR is the core process for reviewing the management of quality assurance within a department against the policies outlined in the Academic Manual. UCL considers IQR to be a developmental process as well as a compliance-testing mechanism. The Academic Manual provides clear and detailed guidance on the process, with helpful links to relevant forms and online process for the submission of documentation. A comprehensive set of documentation is provided to the IQR team comprising self-evaluation statements (SES) and supporting evidence. Independent IQR teams are drawn from internal members (normally three), a student reviewer, an administrator and one external member with experience of quality assurance and enhancement processes.

2.59 The IQR engagement is inclusive, involving meetings with staff and students, from which a full report is produced with recommendations. Recommendations inform an action plan produced by the department and progress is scrutinised after the first year through a departmental meeting with the IQR panel and again after the second year through a written submission to the panel. Effective oversight of the process is undertaken through the Education Committee and RDC who receive a summary of the action plans arising from the IQR process. The IQR process explicitly promotes the identification and dissemination of good practice and such outcomes are collated, circulated and form the basis of UCL Arena workshops. Good practice is also published, together with a summary of recommendations, on the Academic Services website. From the evidence reviewed, the team found that the IQR process is systematically and consistently applied.

2.60 The review team noted that further enhancements are planned to the IQR process in the light of experience. From 2016-17, IQR will incorporate a greater focus on programme review, drawing contributions from external discipline expertise to review academic content of programmes under review. This would replace the current process for periodic review of programmes, known as Augmented Annual Monitoring, which enabled programme teams to

reflect upon the operation of their programmes and identify enhancements every five years. Greater alignment between PSRB accreditations and IQR preparation would also be sought where possible. Furthermore, UCLU is planning to make summary outcomes of IQRs available to student representatives to increase awareness and participation in taking forward IQR recommendations.

2.61 With regards to annual monitoring, a revised process was introduced in September 2015 which is clearly outlined in the new Academic Manual. The new ASER process draws upon enhanced data sets provided to all departments that comprises admissions, progression, final classification, student feedback and graduate destinations. In addition to departmental analysis of data sets, QRSC and Academic Services provide an overarching analysis of the data to identify key institutional issues and mandate actions for all departments to address through the ASER process. Effective consideration of ASER Development and Enhancement Plans is undertaken by the Department Teaching Committee and Student Staff Consultative Committees, prior to approval by the Faculty Teaching Committee (FTC) and onward submission to QRSC. The Chair of QRSC provides individual feedback to Heads of Department to highlight good practice and signpost areas for further development and central support. Close and systematic monitoring of the plans is undertaken by FTC, QRSC and Academic Services with clear reporting to the overarching Education Committee and RDC.

2.62 The ASER process is systematically and consistently applied. Staff met by the team confirmed that they were well supported throughout the process. Academic Services provide support to staff involved and are working with UCLU to improve briefing for student representatives to help them contribute fully. CALT and ChangeMakers initiatives were cited as beneficial in supporting the mandated ASER actions set by QRSC on assessment and feedback. Staff had been able to feed back to faculties on the operation of the ASER process for undergraduate provision and were in the process of providing feedback on the postgraduate taught process, although it was too early to evaluate the full impact of the revised process.

2.63 During 2015, the President and Provost invoked an ASER Intensive engagement process whereby departments with low student satisfaction ratings undergo an extended ASER process. Staff met by the review team reported positive engagement within the ASER Intensive process, resulting in helpful outcomes, although the effectiveness of this approach and impact upon student satisfaction has yet to be determined.

2.64 Programme closure is managed via a Programme Withdrawal Questionnaire (PWQ). Faculties monitor the implications of suspended or withdrawn programmes for any students holding deferred admissions offers. Proposals to withdraw from a programme are approved by the department and faculty and the online PWQ facilitates automatic submission to the Programme and Module Approval Panel for consideration and approval.

2.65 Overall, the team considers that UCL operates effective processes for the programme monitoring and review of taught and research programmes. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.66 UCL has a single complaints policy which was revised into its current form in April 2014 and is available on the UCL and UCLU webpages. The policy outlines the underlying principles for making a complaint and places emphasis on informal resolution prior to formal consideration. A Student Mediator was appointed in 2014 to support students in the informal stages of a complaint and a Complaints Coordinator monitors the operation of the process. The policy and procedure is overseen by the Registry Services department and the number of complaints and outcomes are reported annually to the Education Committee and the Research Degrees Committee. The policy covers two categories of complaints defined as 'academic complaints' and 'non-academic complaints'. The former includes alleged deficiency in teaching or delivery of a programme, as well as what is more commonly referred to as appeals, such as challenges to the results of assessed work. A separate policy exists for complaints around bullying and harassment.

2.67 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing the policy and by meeting staff at various levels of the organisation. The team also met students, some of whom had used the complaints procedure or potentially had cause to do so.

2.68 The complaints procedure has a number of stages and clearly lays out the timeframe for consideration. Students are advised at the end of the process that they may appeal the outcome with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Students are initially encouraged to resolve complaints informally by speaking to the relevant member of staff and the informal route remains an option throughout the complaints process. Whereas informal resolution of academic complaints can lead to changes to delivery, it is unclear from the policy and from meetings with staff and students, whether a student appealing an assessment result through informal resolution could have their grade adjusted as a result of this process. Some students noted that they had raised issues regarding assessment practice through the informal route but noted that they were unclear on the reasons why these had not been resolved. UCL has been advised by its internal auditors to 'formalise' the framework for its informal procedure and the review team supports greater clarity on how assessment decisions are addressed in this regard.

2.69 Information for students on the complaints process is published on both the UCL and UCLU websites, the latter of which provides a guide to complaints. A web page outlining the role of the Student Mediator is also provided and the website directs students to the UCLU Rights and Advice Centre for further support. Despite these resources, students met by the team demonstrated low awareness of the complaints policy and those that had experience of the process were not entirely satisfied. Furthermore, some students with cause for complaint noted that they had been advised not to make a formal complaint, although it was unclear whether this advice was due to the emphasis on informal resolution, due to lack of grounds or to discourage complaints. Although it was noted that information on complaints is imparted during induction, it is not clear from the timetables where this is included or how inclusion is checked. The checklist for student handbooks requires complaints information to be included, although handbooks reviewed by the team indicate that information is not consistent in format with some referring the reader to their tutor for advice, others to the published policy and others still with no or minimal references.

The review team therefore **recommends** that UCL promotes greater awareness of, and signposting to, the complaints policy.

2.70 Although there is scope for greater clarity in the policy, which would assist in raising student awareness and understanding, the procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints are considered fair and accessible. Overall, the review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.71 UCL has 377 students studying abroad and 625 studying at UK partners. The Register of Partnerships lists 37 arrangements with other organisations involving collaboration in the delivery of programmes leading to UCL awards, or cooperation in the making of joint, dual or double awards. The majority of partnerships lead to awards at master's level and five to undergraduate awards. None involve doctoral awards except in so far as Research Council-funded Doctoral Training Partnerships provide shared support for the supervision or skills training of students.

2.72 Seven of these arrangements involve the validation of teaching provided by a partner, six in the form of joint degrees, of which three are provided jointly with other members of the federation of the University of London. In only one case does UCL validate a programme wholly designed by another institution, which was inherited through a merger. In all other cases the teaching and assessment is entirely provided by 'flying faculty' staff from UCL or students prepared for double or dual awards. UCL has one articulation arrangement whereby students progress from the partner to complete a UCL award.

2.73 The regulatory framework currently used by UCL for the approval and management of academic partnerships is relatively new, having been implemented from September 2015, and consists of a Global Engagement Strategy approved by Council, together with an Academic Partnerships Framework that forms part of the Academic Manual and governs the approval of partners and collaborative programmes of study. Support for the investigation and approval of new partners is provided by the Global Engagement Office, and is overseen by the Academic Partnerships Review Group (APRG). A significant proportion of the current partnership arrangements, particularly those using flying faculty to deliver programmes elsewhere, had been developed by the Institute of Education under its own partnership approval procedures. The new procedures developed and used by UCL since September 2015 have in part incorporated the former Institute of Education Collaborative Partnership Manual.

2.74 Where an academic partnership involves new degree programmes or modules, these are dealt with separately from the partnership itself using the approval mechanisms that apply to all UCL provision outlined in sections A3.1 and B1 of this report. Programmes are subject to the standard arrangements for obtaining student feedback, conducting annual monitoring using the ASER process, as well as periodic IQRs. The regulatory framework outlined above would ensure that the Expectation is met.

2.75 The team examined relevant policies and procedures and met staff responsible for their development and implementation. As much of the governance and procedural framework is new, the team examined examples of the legacy arrangements and examples of newer partnerships recently approved. The team also met students with experience of some of the partnership arrangements.

2.76 UCL's approach to international partnerships in particular is relatively untypical of the sector in that it generally does not use its degree awarding powers to franchise its programmes or validate those developed by other institutions. The new Global Engagement

Strategy and the governance arrangements to support it, are led by the Vice-Provost (International) and are designed to support 'partnerships of equivalence' that advance UCL's global reach and mainly focus on expanding learning and research opportunities for its staff and students, rather than offering opportunities for students at other institutions or in other countries to access UCL awards.

2.77 Under the current system, the approval of partner institutions is a separate process from the design and approval of collaborative programmes of study. The institutional approval process involves due diligence checks and risk assessments combined with visits to partners where necessary. The process is documented in a due diligence checklist and with individual Memoranda of Agreement (MoA) based on a standard format. The overall process is managed and monitored by Academic Services and overseen by APRG which then recommends approval to either the Education Committee or RDC as appropriate. Recent approval documentation, including a sample of APRG minutes, examined by the team confirmed that these procedures are appropriate and systematically applied.

2.78 In 2015, UCL agreed to end the off campus presence in Australia following the completion of existing teaching commitments by December 2017. Future engagement in Australia will take the form of a partnership between the UCL's Faculty of Engineering Sciences and the University of South Australia. It had also been agreed with the Qatari authorities that the provision in Doha would become more focused and the range of programmes offered reduced by 2020.

2.79 Monitoring of collaborative programmes is undertaken through the ASER and IQR processes and examples demonstrate that attention is paid to the quality learning environments where students are taught by UCL staff in overseas environments. The team also examined documentation recording the monitoring and review of longer established collaborative provision. Although the detailed methodologies had varied depending on whether the partnership had been developed by UCL or the Institute of Education, the team was able to confirm a pattern of adequate attention to the student experience and outcomes necessary to manage the risks. The team met students studying for UCL joint awards at other London colleges and with training partners and they confirmed that, while these arrangements involved understanding the rules and procedures of more than one institution, the administrative arrangements were well-managed.

2.80 UCL defines learning opportunities delivered with other organisations and leading to the award of UCL credit or qualification as academic partnerships. Under this definition, UCL arranges and supports a wide variety of inter-institutional, work and international placements, internships, training arrangements and student exchanges. These are managed in proportion to risk, usually at departmental level. MoA are used to detail the responsibilities of those involved and how academic standards and quality are to be maintained and monitored, which vary according to the level of risk identified. Placements considered to be low risk require basic checks on health and safety, whereas a full contract would be required for more substantial activities such as double degrees.

2.81 Each academic department has a dedicated careers consultant to develop activities for students such as internships and teaching placements in schools. These are managed locally using templates that are adapted to meet the requirements of the programme and any PRSB involvement. Placements arranged by the Careers service use standard documentation setting out the roles and responsibilities of UCL, the student and the provider or employer. Academic Services retain copies of all MoA, except for student exchanges, study abroad and affiliate student arrangements which are held by the newly reconfigured Global Engagement Office. All international student exchanges involve signed agreements and are overseen by the Study Abroad Team and the Student Mobility Manager. The team was able to meet a small number of students who had been involved in study abroad and

they indicated that, while a variety of problems could occur, there was sufficient planning and oversight to by the Institution to ensure satisfactory experiences.

2.82 The review team considers that UCL has comprehensive regulations and procedures for the management of provision with others and that these operate effectively across the institution. There are appropriate mechanisms in place to manage student placements. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.83 The Academic Manual sets out UCL's regulations for research degrees. The Code of Practice for Graduate Research Degrees produced by the Doctoral School outlines expectations with respect to all aspects of research provision. The Research Degrees Committee (RDC) has responsibility for all aspects of research degrees and reports to the Academic Committee. RDC is chaired by the Pro-Vice Provost of the Doctoral School, with membership which includes Faculty Graduate Tutors, students and support staff involved with research degrees. Faculty Graduate Tutors are responsible for the operation of research degrees in each faculty and are supported by a Faculty Graduate Teaching Committee. Departmental Graduate Tutors operate within academic departments. The design of the framework would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.84 The review team met research students and staff responsible for the oversight and support of research degrees and research degree supervisors. The team also reviewed regulations, codes of practice, committee minutes and other documentation related to the management of research degrees.

2.85 Admission and registration regulations are provided in the Academic Manual, supplemented by details in the Code of Practice and set out clear procedures for the consideration of applications and interviews of applicants by appropriately experienced and qualified staff. Departmental Graduate Tutors are responsible for admissions in their department. Research students confirm a broadly positive experience of the admissions process. A wide range of information is provided to new students and the structured approach to providing information on research integrity is particularly helpful. New students receive a central induction led by the Doctoral School, supplemented by faculty and departmental inductions. Students who met the team confirmed that an induction programme had been useful, some being highly structured with a requirement to undertake a number of cohort activities, and some examples of induction targeted to specific needs such as international students transitioning to a UK research community. Students who started at other times of the year reported a less structured induction experience.

2.86 All research students are required to have a supervisory team consisting of a principal and one or more subsidiary supervisors. Effective arrangements are in place to monitor the number of research students allocated to a supervisor and to authorise and record supervision arrangements. All supervisors must be appropriately trained, qualified and experienced with more stringent requirements in place for principal supervisors. Effective training is provided as part of the CALT Arena programme, in coordination with the Doctoral School, which is mandatory for all new research supervisors. Staff met by the team confirmed that these arrangements operate consistently across faculties, and that supervisor training had been an effective preparation for supervision. Students confirmed that the procedures for allocating supervisors were satisfactory and that they receive regular and effective supervision. Some departments have adopted a Thesis Committee model whereby a small committee meets with a research student to review progress and students with experience of this were very positive about its benefits. Supervision arrangements in the Institute of Education Faculty are slightly different but are being brought into line with UCL

requirements. RDC monitors supervision through IQR reports, statistics on the research student log and student surveys. These arrangements provide a robust framework for the operation and oversight of research degree supervision.

2.87 The progress of students is efficiently managed via a mandatory online recording system that includes records of supervisory meetings, academic progress and skills development activities. Use of the system is monitored by Departmental and Faculty Graduate Tutors and RDC and also monitored as a metric in the IQR process enabling systematic oversight of implementation and a comprehensive overview of the progress of research student across the Institution. Induction is provided and supplemented by handbooks to all staff and students. Research students confirmed that they all use the research student log and that it provides a good opportunity for them to receive written feedback from the supervisory team. Research students undergo a transfer from MPhil to PhD through a formal, independent review process between nine and 18 months of study. Research students report that this is a highly effective and valued process providing independent feedback.

2.88 Skills training for research students is provided through the wide-ranging and comprehensive programme offered by the Doctoral School and academic departments. The programme is mapped onto the Vitae RDF and also includes training provided by UCL Careers. Individual research plans and training needs are agreed with the supervisory team and recorded through the research student log. Research students were positive about the extensive training available and noted that some very popular workshops often had waiting lists. Regular analysis is undertaken of the programme to ensure that, wherever possible, it matches student demand. Research students report pressures on space and variability in space provision, although not as pronounced as the pressures reported by undergraduate students. Research students who met the team were positive about the research environment provided by UCL, citing working with world-class staff in leading research facilities, a broad range of opportunities to engage in the UCL research environment and opportunities for interdisciplinary working as strengths to the research provision at UCL.

2.89 The framework for assessing research degrees is clearly set out in the Academic Manual with further guidance provided for students, supervisors and examiners. The regulations require two examiners, one of whom must be external to UCL. Explicit criteria in the regulations are checked by the research degrees office and forwarded to the Faculty Graduate Tutor for verification with final approval being given by the chair of RDC. The committee receives regular reports on degree examination outcomes. The Doctoral School offers training for research degree examiners through UCL Arena in collaboration with CALT.

2.90 Research students who teach confirm that training is a formal requirement, and is provided through the CALT Arena One programme. Research students reported that demand by researchers wanting to teach exceeded available opportunities and that departments used a variety of approaches to allocate teaching duties.

2.91 RDC maintains effective oversight of the research degree community through consideration of a wide range of documents. The committee also works effectively through Faculty Graduate Teaching Committees chaired by Faculty Graduate Tutors to assure itself of the appropriate operation across faculties. RDC is currently reviewing research degree regulations to consolidate these into a single coherent set, which the review team considers a welcome development. RDC receives regular reports on the results of key surveys, including PRES and the Student Barometer, and also considers IQR reports and agrees resulting actions with faculties. Survey results and actions are reported via the Doctoral School web pages to engage research students and supervisors. Research students are members of UCL, faculty and departmental committees. A new Centre for Doctoral

Education has been established in the Institute of Education to build on the expertise acquired through the UCL-Institute of Education merger with plans to develop a programme of research in doctoral education.

2.92 The Doctoral School constituted a new Doctoral Training Strategy Committee (DTSC) in 2014 to support the development of UCL's Doctoral Education Strategy and provide a conduit for UCL to engage with national and European developments in doctoral education. Progress against the targets in the Strategy is thoroughly monitored via the annual Doctoral Planning Process instigated in 2014-15 which provides a wide-ranging and comprehensive approach for critically examining each faculty's provision with particular emphasis on relevant strategic aims, monitoring progress against key performance indicators and planning for the future. Documents produced by each faculty for this process are considered by the DTSC in a detailed manner with responses provided to faculties for further consideration and discussion. This process provides faculties with comprehensive data on their research provision for annual reflection. In view of the thoroughness of this approach and the other widespread activities of the Doctoral School to enhance the experience of research students in a systematic and coordinated manner across faculties, the review team concludes that the single Institution-wide framework provided by the Doctoral School for facilitating and promoting the quality of the postgraduate research degree environment is **good practice**.

2.93 UCL has a single complaints procedure as described in section B9. Explicit information on how to access this is provided through the Doctoral School Handbook and the Code of Practice. Students are encouraged to seek an informal resolution through the Student Mediator in the first instance. RDC receives an annual report on student complaints and considers recommendations for changes to policy emerging from analysis.

2.94 The team considers that UCL has in place a robust framework for the management and monitoring of postgraduate research degrees and ensures an appropriate research environment and quality of learning opportunities and support. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.95 In determining its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at UCL, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low in all cases with the exception of Expectations B4 and B6, where the review team considers there is a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities.

2.96 The review team considers that the Institution articulates a strong commitment to the quality of learning opportunities and has a clear strategy and policy framework to support its aims. Overall, arrangements for the provision of appropriate learning opportunities are sound, well-established and operate effectively. The team identifies features of the institutional approach that make a particularly positive contribution to meeting the Expectations, specifically the engagement of students in projects to enhance their learning experience and the coordinated approach to promoting the quality of the postgraduate research environment.

2.97 The review team notes some areas where systemic and/or persistent issues are affecting student satisfaction with the quality of learning opportunities, notably regarding assessment and feedback and in relation to limitations on physical space. In both cases, these issues restrict the Institution's ability to fully support student development and achievement for all students. UCL is taking appropriate action although the impact of the measures in place have yet to be fully realised. The review team therefore affirms the action being taken and concludes that there is a moderate risk to the quality of learning opportunities. In other areas, the review team affirms proposed changes to personal tutoring arrangements and makes two recommendations for action regarding consistent implementation of Student Staff Consultative Committees to ensure that these function effectively in all cases, and to promote greater awareness of the complaints policy among the student body. These changes do not require major structural or operational changes to procedures and the review team therefore considers these to be low risk.

2.98 Overall, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at UCL **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 UCL's website is the main source of information for current and prospective students, staff and other stakeholders. The Communications and Marketing (CAM) Directorate has responsibility for maintaining the website and the prospectus and has produced a Student Communications Strategy to ensure a more coordinated approach to student communications. The printed and online prospectus is reviewed regularly and approved through the Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee (StRAFC). The Finance and Business Affairs department oversees the University's data protection and Freedom of Information obligations.

3.2 The website directs current students to access the UCL virtual learning environment (VLE) where key information about programmes of study, learning resources and procedures are provided. The VLE is overseen by the Information Services division. The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.3 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by analysing the website, course handbooks and relevant policies, and also met key staff with responsibilities for information. The team met students to discuss access to information and establish whether information provided was fit for purpose.

3.4 The website describes the process for application and admission to the programme of study, as well as providing information about programme content, facilities for prospective students and open days. Programme specifications are available online as well as in the prospectus, which is reviewed and updated annually. International students are directed to any additional documentation or other requirements, such as English language requirements, where appropriate. Overall, students met by the review team considered that the information was sufficient to inform their decisions although a number stated that information about costs of studying at UCL could be made more comprehensive and UCL is working towards meeting guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority in this area to provide clearer information. Some students also reported that information displayed about fees was incorrect, however, arrangements are in place to check the correct notification of fees.

3.5 Departments maintain their own websites to provide specific information regarding the department and its programmes. Current students are issued with course handbooks which include details of modules and local arrangements. There are minimum requirements for modules to be published on the VLE. Students met by the team were generally positive about the information provided regarding their programme and student satisfaction with the VLE was high. The checklist of information to include in the student handbook is comprehensive, however there is a variability in the presentation of module information, both in the handbook and on the VLE. The Education Committee has recently recognised that this is an area for further work. In particular, information for students on the complaints policy is variable in handbooks and despite webpages outlining the process, awareness

among students on the complaints policy, and the operation of the formal and informal stages is low (see recommendation in section B9).

3.6 UCL uses its website to publish its mission, values and overall strategy, and these details are readily available from the home page. The Academic Manual is the main source of information about policies, procedures and regulations at UCL, including academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement. The Academic Manual is available online and clearly laid out. It applies to all provision regardless of delivery location and a register of partnerships has recently been consolidated and is available on the website. Transcripts and certificates are provided for students at the end of their studies and students are issued with a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) to record additional student activities.

3.7 The Student Communications Strategy has been implemented for 2015, overseen by a Student Communications Strategy Group. The Strategy recognises that there have been some shortcomings in communications between the Institution and the student body and sets out steps to address them, such as the development of a single weekly newsletter.

3.8 Overall, the review team considers that UCL has effective processes in place to ensure that information provided to its audiences is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9 In determining its judgement on the quality of information about learning opportunities at UCL the review team considered the findings against the criteria outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this section is met and the level of risk is considered low.

3.10 Overall, the review team considers that UCL has appropriate mechanisms to ensure that information about learning opportunities is trustworthy, accessible to a range of stakeholders and that it is fit for purpose for its intended audience. Although, as noted in section B9, the review team considers that further work is required to promote greater awareness of, and signposting to, the complaints policy.

3.11 The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities produced by UCL **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

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

Findings

4.1 The provision of high quality learning opportunities is central to UCL's mission and strategic direction. The UCL 2034 strategy, underpinned by the Education Strategy and the Doctoral Education Strategy, provides the strategic framework for the articulation and dissemination of education enhancement priorities. The institutional approach to enhancement is embedded within the quality assurance processes outlined in the Academic Manual and throughout the Quality Framework Review in an approach which the Institution describes as mutually dependent and reinforcing. The design of the approach to enhancement within the quality assurance framework would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.2 The review team tested the approach through the analysis of documentation outlining the quality assurance and enhancement processes in operation, and also through the review of case studies showcasing enhancement activities. The team also met staff and students during the review to discuss the approach.

4.3 UCL has an explicitly academic-led approach to enhancement. An ethos of continuous improvement that expects and encourages enhancement of student learning opportunities within a research intensive institution has been fostered by the President and Provost, Vice Provost (Education and Student Affairs) and the Registrar since 2013. A focus on education leadership and building capacity and vision for excellence in education is integral to the UCL 2034 Strategy and has resulted in the adoption of a new Education Strategy. The Strategy has refocused the work of the Centre for Advanced Learning and Teaching (CALT) to facilitate educational excellence and innovation, and led to the greater integration of administrative services to provide a holistic approach to student support around the concept of the student lifecycle. Nine key objectives identified in the Education Strategy reflect priorities for enhancement including implementation of a Connected Curriculum where research-based, rather than traditional research-led, education underpins the student experience.

4.4 Ongoing identification and implementation of enhancement initiatives is integrated in a systematic and planned manner at institutional level. In addition to National Student Survey (NSS) data, robust information is generated as part of internal quality assurance procedures, including Staff Student Consultative Committees, external examiner reports, student experience questionnaires, the Doctoral Planning Process, Annual Student Experience Review (ASER), and periodic Internal Quality Review (IQR). Data is systematically considered at a strategic level through the Quality Review Subcommittee and the Education Committee. This consideration allows good practice to be supported and identifies opportunities for further improvement and possible development of enhancement initiatives. The review team saw evidence of the quality assurance and enhancement cycle working effectively in practice, for example in recognition of weakness in assessment and feedback and the deliberate steps currently being taken to improve the quality of the student experience in this area (see section B6).

4.5 The Education Strategy identifies high-level institutional priorities for enhancement, including the implementation of a Connected Curriculum, improving the teaching estate and fostering a culture of student engagement and leadership. The Connected Curriculum framework aims to reconceptualise education at UCL to support students to learn by actively

doing research in a research-based curriculum rather than more passively experiencing research through traditional research-led delivery. The UCL ChangeMakers initiative enables students to become actively involved in quality enhancement and assurance, by working as consultants on curriculum development projects, and having the opportunity to help shape changes to education at UCL. This initiative is supported by UCLU, good awareness exists among students and evidence of impact within departments is emerging. Investment in improvements to UCL's estate, including development of a further campus at Stratford, reflect increasing pressures on space and facilities arising from growth in student numbers, which is a particular concern of current students.

4.6 The team noted the support provided by the cross-institutional Doctoral School and CALT in supporting and developing enhancement initiatives. The review team also gained a strong sense of vision and commitment among senior staff which is shared by staff working in the faculties, departments and central support roles. Enhancement initiatives are planned to make a positive impact on the quality of student learning opportunities and impact will be measured over a three to five year period. Internal measures of success include an aim to achieve high levels of satisfaction in the National Student Survey in order to place UCL in the top quartile of performance of Russell Group universities.

4.7 Overall, the review team concludes that UCL takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of student learning opportunities. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.8 In determining its judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities at UCL, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this section is met and the level of risk is considered low.

4.9 The review team considers that the institutional approach to enhancement is clearly articulated and embedded within the quality assurance and review framework that operates across the institution. Enhancement activity takes place within a well-defined strategic context and involves both staff and students to identify and enact improvements to student learning opportunities. Some initiatives are relatively recent and their impact is not yet clearly determined, but a range of performance indicators enables UCL to reflect on and evaluate strategies for enhancement.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1 The development and support of digital literacy skills among both students and staff is a theme that links the UCL 2034 Strategy, the Education Strategy 2016-21 and the Connected Curriculum initiative. The UCL 2034 Strategy commits UCL to becoming a global leader in the integration of research and education. This intention is further articulated in the Education Strategy 2016-21 in which the Connected Curriculum is closely linked to the establishment of a digital learning infrastructure supporting students, staff and the research activities of the Institution. Objectives 2 and 7 of the Education Strategy make clear that the development of a research-based education for students requires, among other changes, the construction of an appropriate technical and skills infrastructure to support this approach to student learning.

5.2 The review team received case studies of the institutional arrangements that support and develop digital education and digital literacy as part of UCL's approach to the enhancement of learning and teaching. While the concept and plan for a research-based Connected Curriculum is relatively new, the project having begun in 2015, UCL's explicit commitment to the integration of learning with digital skills is well established, having been articulated in, and developed out of, the 2012 E-learning Strategy. Since 2012 staff seeking help in using digital sources and techniques in their teaching have been assisted by an E-Learning Environments (ELE) team in Information Services, expanded and known as the Digital Education Team from 2015. Investment has been allocated to support the Strategy and the detailed implementation plans overseen by the Learning and Teaching Information Services Governance group (LTISG) chaired by the Vice Provost (Education and Student Affairs).

5.3 The documents provided to the team and accounts given by both students and staff provide evidence that the 2012 E-learning Strategy had been successful in embedding opportunities for innovative digital-based forms of learning and teaching within its degree programmes and staff development. Departmental e-learning champions work with ELE to monitor and share experience in using digital media for learning, assessment and feedback. Inevitably, take-up and use of the support has varied across the Institution, depending to a degree on the enthusiasm of academic staff and the suitability of the disciplines and modules involved. However, the wide range of examples includes a 'UCL digifest' of student workshops in 2014; an environmental change module in which students learn to develop sophisticated scientific blogs; modules which require students to submit digital portfolios consisting of recorded audio, video, data sets, images, maps and visualisations; and the Integrated Engineering Programme (IEP) in which students create digital resources. Students met by the review team were able to confirm that those involved had benefitted from these innovative ways of learning.

5.4 A particular feature of UCL's approach has been the development of the E-Learning Baseline Guidance document for staff that ensures that all modules comply with detailed specifications and content requirements for online resources, most often provided through the virtual learning environment. The baseline, or minimum student entitlement to online support, first set in 2011, has been upgraded and developed each year since. Support for staff in meeting the minimum requirements, and for exceeding these, is provided by the Digital Education Team. Students met by the team confirmed broad satisfaction with the e-learning infrastructure and support.

5.5 While the integration of digital literacy support and training is not yet a universal part of all programmes and modules, the review team confirms that UCL has developed and

implemented strategies that support the development of digital skills among students and staff, and has begun embedding digital learning more widely within the curriculum.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557 050
Website: www.qaa.ac.uk