



# Higher Education Review of The University of East Anglia

October 2015

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the University of East Anglia. The review took place from 12 to 16 October 2015 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Elizabeth Barnes
- Professor David Lamburn
- Dr Richard Harrison
- Ms Kate Wicklow (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the University of East Anglia 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)<sup>1</sup> 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 7.

In reviewing the University of East Anglia 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,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review](#)<sup>4</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859).

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review web pages:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review).

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about the University of East Anglia

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the University of East Anglia.

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meet** 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 the University of East Anglia.

- The significant contribution made by Academic Advisers and the Dean of Students' Office in supporting the development and achievement of students (Expectations B4, B2 and Enhancement).
- The strategic approach that is being taken to enhance the employability of students (Expectation B4 and Enhancement).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to the University of East Anglia.

By September 2016:

- take steps to address inconsistencies in its stated positioning of the Medical Bachelor/Bachelor of Surgery degree on the FHEQ (Expectations A2.1, A1 and A3.1)
- take steps to address the approval and completeness of its programme specifications (Expectations A2.2 and A3.1)
- ensure that external academic expertise is consistently obtained, documented and considered as part of the course approval process to verify threshold academic standards and to demonstrate that the appropriate external reference points have been considered (Expectations A3.4, A3.1 and B1)
- ensure effective oversight and monitoring of cumulative changes and deviations to programmes (Expectation B1)
- review assessment board regulations and their application to ensure greater consistency and equity of treatment of students (Expectations B6 and A2.1)
- define, articulate and implement arrangements for the approval of cotutelle partners for dual awards, including taking steps to ensure that a cotutelle agreement has been signed before the relevant activity commences (Expectations B10 and B1)
- put in place mechanisms to ensure effective oversight to manage the variability in practice in the provision of programme information to current students (Expectation C)
- communicate effectively to students information about programme learning outcomes at the start of, and throughout, their studies (Expectations C and A2.2).

## Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps being taken to implement the Code of Practice on Student Representation to enable students to contribute to the management and enhancement of their programmes (Expectation B5).
- The steps being taken to improve consistency in assessment, marking and feedback (Expectation B6).

## Theme: Student Employability

The University of East Anglia identified student employability as a strategic priority in 2012, which is reflected in key objectives set in its Corporate Plan 2012-16. Its approach has resulted in significant investment in a range of activities, greater student engagement with the reshaped Careers Service, and changes in the approach to the development of student employability. New posts and structures have been set up at all levels, including an Academic Director of Employability, an Employability Executive, Associate Deans for Employability in each faculty, and school-level Directors of Employability. Its new plan for the period 2016-20 will enhance the strategic approach to student employability and will be underpinned by Faculty Employability Plans.

The University aims to ensure that during their studies students achieve attributes that will equip them for graduate-level employment. The restructured Careers Service offers a comprehensive range of services and approaches to student enterprise, and the development of entrepreneurial skills has been remodelled. The University has a strong relationship with employers through the Local Enterprise Partnership and community organisations. It has developed its Student Enterprise Strategy and appointed a Student Enterprise Officer to support its development. Provision for research students has been expanded, and a comprehensive range of workshops is available through the Personal and Professional Development Programme.

Courses are designed to align with the development of graduate attributes (rather than imposing compulsory modules), expand skills training and engage employers in the delivery and development of the curriculum. A review of the University's Academic Advising System in 2014-15 has resulted in policy and resource development to enhance approaches to employability and students have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of extracurricular and volunteering experiences.

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

## About the University of East Anglia

The University of East Anglia (the University) is a campus university based on the outskirts of Norwich, founded in 1963. It was one of seven new universities created in the 1960s and received its Royal Charter in 1964. It offers a broad range of programmes to over 15,000 students, the majority of whom are full-time; in 2014-15 there were 2,278 students (635 full-time equivalents) studying on a part-time basis. Approximately 70 per cent of students are studying at undergraduate level; postgraduate research students constitute approximately 7.5 per cent of the total student population (1,165 students in July 2015). The University has no overseas provision apart from a small number of students (80 in July

2015) on pre and post-registration nursing programmes in Guernsey, that are being taught out.

The mission of the University, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2012-16 is to make a real impact on the world; encourage people to question; research the bigger issues (for example global climate change); prepare and equip students for transition into successful careers in the world of work; and to stimulate enterprise. Four guiding precepts underpin this mission and include: fostering interdisciplinary research and disseminating the most advanced human understanding, capability and creativity; serving as a powerful cultural and economic stimulant in the region and beyond; promoting the principles of fairness and equality and nurturing a collegial, socially inclusive environment; and maintaining and developing a campus that is both of outstanding quality and sustainable.

The University is a leading member of the Norwich Research Park. The Norwich Research Park is a partnership between the University, the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, and four independent world-renowned research institutes, and is one of Europe's biggest concentrations of researchers in the fields of environment, health and plant science.

The University is led by its Executive Team, which is chaired by Vice-Chancellor. The University has two Pro Vice-Chancellors: the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), who has oversight of all educational activity with particular reference to taught programmes and the student experience; and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), who is responsible for research, postgraduate research (PGR) degree programmes, and the University's enterprise and engagement activities. Each of the University's four faculties is represented by an Executive Dean. The University's professional services are represented by the Registrar. In 2011 an administrative restructure created a central Learning and Teaching Service (LTS) to support staff in the delivery, and students in the study of, taught degree courses. The four faculties incorporate 28 schools of study plus a Graduate School in each. Academic administrative support is provided by three LTS Hubs for undergraduate provision and a student-facing Hub for PGR students. The Hubs were established following the 2011 restructure to provide more consistent academic administrative support staff and a single point of contact for academic administrative support services for students.

A new Vice-Chancellor took up his role in September 2014, and the University is in the process of developing a new corporate plan: the University Plan 2016-20. In November 2014 the Senate approved University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2014-19, which sets out 10 strategic aims with measurable success criteria. The University values the importance of teaching to its strategic mission and this is recognised in the career structure for academic staff. Academic staff are appointed to either a teaching and research, or a teaching and scholarship post; both categories are required to engage with teaching; for teaching and scholarship staff teaching represents the vast majority of their professional output. The University has made a significant strategic investment in additional academic staff, with an additional 162.5 full-time equivalent members of academic staff being appointed since the last QAA Institutional Audit in 2009. The student/staff ratio in 2013-14 was 13.7 to 1.

During the period since the last QAA review the University has established and withdrawn from a joint venture with INTO University Partnerships for a University of London campus. The joint venture was established in 2009 and the London campus opened to students in January 2010. The University followed institutional approval procedures from May 2009 through to final approval in July by its Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC). In January 2014 the University announced the withdrawal from teaching in London as part of a wider strategy to focus on core strengths and streamline its course offering. The London campus is thus no longer in operation; there have been no new entrants to the validated provision in London from 2014-15 onwards and the last cohort of students on a full-time validated course

completed in mid-2015. The University is in discussion with a small number of part-time students regarding possible transfer to complete their studies at another university.

The University introduced the New Academic Model (NAM) for all undergraduate and integrated master's courses in the academic year 2013-14, following a considerable period of development and consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The strategic intent of the NAM was to ensure: equality of treatment for all students; clear and consistent rules, regulations and assessment procedures; coherent and integrated courses; improved student engagement; better outcomes for students; enhanced experience for students on joint honours courses; and enhanced employability for students.

New course proposals were produced for all courses to be delivered under the NAM and a scrutiny group was established to report on innovative and creative interpretations of the model, and to identify examples of best practice. The University formally approved the finalised regulations for the NAM along with transitional arrangements for continuing students at the meeting of the LTC on 26 June 2013. The University has plans to evaluate the success of the NAM with a substantive review timetabled to take place in 2018; an interim evaluative report was presented to the LTC in May 2015.

In September 2011 the University reviewed the quality of academic activities in teaching and research taking place in the School of Music, its outreach activities, and the structures and resources available to support the whole range of activity, in the context of the University's Corporate Plan. In November 2011 the University Council considered the report of the review panel and endorsed the panel's proposal to close the School of Music. Following this decision, the LTC established a subgroup, the School of Music Monitoring Group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic). This subgroup had oversight of the students' academic experience within the School of Music, and to ensure that the University fulfilled its obligations with regard to quality assurance and provided support mechanisms for students up until the closure of the School.

In November 2013 the Senate approved the LTC's delegation of its authority for decisions on postgraduate research programme matters to the newly established Postgraduate Research Executive (PGR Executive). This was formed, with updated terms of reference, from the merger of the Postgraduate Research Students Executive and the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group. Combined with the restructuring of PGR administration and its location within the Research and Enterprise Division, the merger was intended to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of governance of PGR degree programmes. The new PGR Executive is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise).

The first Graduate School was established in August 2009 in the Faculty of Science to provide a focus for PGR training, share good practice in supervision and to help promote a sense of research community. Following this, Graduate Schools were launched in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in September 2010, in the Faculty of Social Sciences in October 2012, and in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences in January 2013. While all PGR students continue to be registered within individual schools, the Graduate Schools provide an administrative, physical and intellectual focus point for all PGR students in each faculty.

The University has ambitious plans for growth in terms of student recruitment and is aiming to improve its ranking in all the major UK league tables of higher education providers. It considers its key challenges over the next five year to be: balancing growth with enhanced quality; maximising the capacity/skills of staff; increasing the proportion of staff with Higher Education Academy recognition; developing the campus in support of the delivery of higher

education; and ensuring that the student experience on joint honours degrees is comparable with that on other programmes.

The University currently has formal partnership arrangements with five other higher education providers for the delivery of its programmes. These are City College Norwich; Easton and Otley College; the Mountview Academy of Arts; University Campus Suffolk; and the Institute of Health and Social Care Studies in Guernsey. The Institute of Health and Social Care Studies has been served notice to terminate the arrangements following approval by the Senate in February 2015 of a recommendation to withdraw from this relationship; the University is supporting enrolled students to conclude their studies. The University has a longstanding relationship with University Campus Suffolk, co-validating its awards with the University of Essex since the inception of University Campus Suffolk in 2007. The University is currently supporting University Campus Suffolk in its plan to gain taught degree awarding powers.

The University's Partnerships Strategy aims to expand collaborative arrangements with further education colleges, potentially also in partnership with employers. A new partnership with the Royal Marsden Hospital NHS Foundation Trust was agreed in 2015, but there are no students yet registered on University programmes at this institution. The University is also keen to develop articulation arrangements with key strategic international partnerships.

The University has an embedded INTO University Partnerships college on campus, which forms the INTO/University Norwich (Joint Venture), delivering a range of preparatory courses for higher education at the University.

A number of new doctoral training partnerships have been established since 2012. The University is currently a partner in three doctoral training partnerships and is preparing for involvement in further partnerships.

The QAA Institutional Audit in April 2009 identified six features of good practice, including the systematic approach to plagiarism, the framework for student involvement in quality assurance, the strategic management of student support services through the Dean of Students' Office, the operation of collaborative provision, and the extensive and student-focused training programme for PGR students. There is some evidence that the University has built on some of these areas of good practice, and in particular this review notes the continuing significant contribution made by the Dean of Students' Office in supporting the development and achievement of students.

There were five advisable and two desirable recommendations from the QAA review in 2009. The QAA mid-cycle review in May 2012 identified how these recommendations have been addressed, and many of the recommendations relating to inconsistent practice across curriculum areas are being or have been addressed through the introduction of the NAM and the restructuring of academic administrative support. Significant work has taken place on admissions processes for PGR students, and there is continuing development of support and training for PGR students who teach. However, the review team notes that one 2009 advisable recommendation has not been fully addressed and has resulted in a recommendation from this review regarding the continued variability in practice in the provision of programme information to current students in handbooks.

## Explanation of the findings about the University of East Anglia

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 The University positions its awards at the appropriate level of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). University regulations explicitly reference the FHEQ. Alignment with the FHEQ is required in the development of new courses, programme specifications and modules, which is checked in course approval and the five-yearly course review process. External examiners are asked to confirm alignment with the FHEQ to give further assurance that the University's policies and procedures are applied. Programme specifications provide the opportunity to demonstrate how overall learning outcomes align with the relevant qualifications' descriptors of the FHEQ. The University provides appropriate guidance for those developing courses and completing the specifications.

1.2 The nomenclature used by the University for its academic qualifications is specified in guidance and aligns with the titling conventions specified in the FHEQ.

1.3 Qualifications are awarded only where students demonstrate the achievement of positively designed programme learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are defined in the programme specifications, and requirements for awards are clearly specified in the University's General Regulations (Awards).

1.4 The University takes into account QAA's published guidance on qualification characteristics for undergraduate, master's and doctoral awards. In addition, there is a

requirement that all programme specifications take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and helpful guidance on their use is provided. Requirements of any professional bodies are similarly considered, and the external examiner report template and guidance on five-yearly course review require comments on alignment with qualifications and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.5 The University's modular framework defines the minimum credit attainment for its credit bearing awards, which it indicates is aligned with the *Higher Education Credit Framework for England*. Regulations specify the award requirements in terms of both credit attainment and levels.

1.6 The University has appropriate policies, procedures and regulations that enable Expectation A1 to be met.

1.7 The review team explored the effectiveness of the processes by considering a range of relevant documentation presented by the University, including: the Academic Calendar; processes for the approval and review of programmes and courses; templates; regulations; completed course and module submissions; review reports; external examiners' reports; and documentation relevant to courses provided in partnership with others. The review team also met relevant senior, academic and support staff.

1.8 The University introduced its New Academic Model (NAM) for all undergraduate and integrated master's courses in 2013-14, with transitional arrangements for continuing students. Its introduction followed a lengthy period of consultation and it has a clear operational framework and regulations. The key features, principles and requirements of the NAM were reflected in the documentation scrutinised by the review team. The alignment of undergraduate and integrated master's degrees, along with the availability of exit awards such as certificates and diplomas of higher education, is explicit in the regulations. However, the review team noted that the University's Medical Bachelor/Bachelor of Surgery degree, while correctly positioned at Level 7 of the FHEQ and with appropriate Level 7 learning outcomes, was referenced as being at FHEQ Level 6 in the University's regulations. This is explored further under Expectation A2.1 and leads to a recommendation to take steps to address the inconsistencies. In all other respects there is clear alignment with the FHEQ through guidance documents, programme specifications, module outlines and course proposals.

1.9 The University's research degree qualifications have been mapped against relevant qualification descriptors and characteristics documents.

1.10 Broadly, the University's requirements for the required level and volume of credit for each award are aligned to the Qualifications and Credit Framework. The review team noted some minor instances where the University had chosen not to follow the national guidance.

1.11 Staff have a good understanding of the external reference points and of the operation of the University's processes for approval monitoring and review of courses. They are well supported by the guidance provided and by the University-wide Learning and Teaching Service. Requirements to consider Subject Benchmark Statements are contained in relevant documentation and the review team saw evidence that such requirements are met.

1.12 Overall, the University makes appropriate use of external reference points (including the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, guidance on qualification characteristics, PSRB requirements, and Vitae's Researcher Development Framework) to secure threshold academic standards. Courses delivered in collaboration with others are required to meet the same standards. Documentation seen by the review team indicates that there is appropriate alignment of titles, levels of study and credit requirements. The review

team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the University has effective mechanisms for implementing and monitoring its procedures.

**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**

1.13 The University maintains oversight of academic standards through its established committee and governance structure. The Senate is the ultimate academic authority and delegates to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) powers for, among other things, the development of policy, regulatory frameworks and codes of practice to secure the standards of awards and the quality of the student experience. Academic activities are organised into four faculties, where key quality assurance processes are managed through Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees, which report to the LTC. Although not formally required, many schools have Teaching Committees or Teaching Executives to support School Teaching Directors. Governance arrangements for postgraduate research activities operate through the Postgraduate Research Executive and Faculty Graduate School Executives.

1.14 Three Academic Directors provide support for taught, research and partnership activity, and operate across faculties. The Taught Programmes Policy Group has an advisory role for the development of policy procedure and practice.

1.15 The University's Academic Calendar provides key information underpinning its academic activities. It contains the University's general and academic regulations, and is updated annually. The introduction of the NAM is intended to ensure equity of treatment for all students, with clear and consistent regulations governing assessment, progression and the treatment of extenuating circumstances. Transitional arrangements are in place for students who began their studies prior to its introduction. Regulations governing the processes for confirmation of marks, reassessment, award of credit and awards, and recognition of prior learning are clear and accessible. Specific information is provided to students on the steps taken by the University to ensure the accuracy of marks.

1.16 Specific and appropriate regulations apply to postgraduate research programmes through the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

1.17 The University's governance structure, frameworks and regulations enable Expectation A2.1 to be met.

1.18 The review team met staff and students and considered a range of evidence provided by the University, including documented policies and procedures, terms of reference, and minutes of committees and meetings.

1.19 The review team found that the University's governance framework is designed to ensure that it can discharge its responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities. Consideration of the papers and minutes of the committees confirmed that responsibilities are being fulfilled within their respective terms of reference. Staff have a clear understanding of the framework, procedures and policies, and are provided with comprehensive guidance and advice.

1.20 As noted in paragraphs 1.8 and 1.48, the University correctly positions its Medical Bachelor/Bachelor of Surgery degree at Level 7 of the FHEQ, and the stated programme

learning outcomes align with the expectations of the FHEQ. However, the review team notes that the programme does not contain any Level 7 modules that map directly to the Level 7 learning outcomes, and that the University's regulations position the award at Level 6 of the FHEQ. The review team **recommends** that the University take steps to address inconsistencies in its stated positioning of the Medical Bachelor/Bachelor of Surgery degree on the FHEQ.

1.21 The University's regulations are consistent with relevant national frameworks. Policies for the provision of credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning are clear. The award of credit and qualifications of the University, and the application of consistent rules relating to extenuating circumstances, reassessment, grading and classification are clearly defined. Consideration of a sample of minutes of examination boards confirms that boards apply the University's regulations consistently. The attendance of external examiners at examination boards provides additional assurance that standards are met, which is confirmed by external examiners' reports.

1.22 For undergraduate and integrated master's degrees the University is in transition from the Common Course Structure to the new Bachelor's and Integrated Master's Regulations, which form part of the implementation of the NAM. The University has put in place appropriate transitional arrangements for students. Two key principles of the NAM are to ensure equality of treatment for all students and to provide clear and consistent rules, regulations and assessment procedures. In this context, the review team noted the potential for some inconsistencies in the treatment of students in relation to: the awarding of starred first class degrees; differential progression requirements for some integrated master's programmes; and provisions within the regulations to permit examination boards discretionary use of alterations or concessions. These are explored in more detail under Expectation B6, in which the review team recommends that the University puts mechanisms in place to ensure greater consistency and equity of treatment of students. An interim review of the NAM had taken place and a further review is planned after a full period of operation. The review team anticipated that in such a review the University will wish to assure itself that the key principles of the NAM were embedded and that the rationale for any exceptions are transparent to students.

1.23 The review team found that institutional regulatory frameworks for postgraduate awards are appropriate. It noted that the University plans to implement the precepts of the NAM on postgraduate taught programmes and will seek approval for detailed regulatory changes during the current academic year for implementation in 2016-17.

1.24 The review team concludes that the University has comprehensive and transparent academic frameworks and regulations which are effective in securing academic standards. Accordingly, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

1.25 The definitive record for taught courses is provided by programme specifications. All taught programmes are required to have in place a completed specification. The University has a standard and appropriate programme specification template, which is embedded in the new programme approval forms. Completed versions are available to all relevant stakeholders.

1.26 Programme specifications provide a record of the intended learning outcomes and the means by which these are achieved and demonstrated. The template has been designed to cover all of the information required to secure alignment with relevant internal and external reference points, including PSRB accreditation. The University provides clear guidance on the development of programme specifications, course approval and modification. The University's academic regulations emphasise that the programme specification is a key reference point for the delivery and assessment of programmes. The University does not provide a central database for modules contributing to its qualifications. However, information is available to students covering the indicative content and structure, intended learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities, and assessment strategy.

1.27 The University indicates that the definitive record for research degrees is contained in regulations for individual awards, the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and associated policy documents.

1.28 The definitive records form the source for the production of the records of study provided to students.

1.29 The University's policies and frameworks enable the Expectation to be met.

1.30 The review team analysed relevant documentation submitted by the University, including programme specifications, module information and transcripts. The team also met students and staff to discuss the approach to maintaining and using definitive programme records.

1.31 The evidence seen by the review team stipulated the definitive information required by the University and the means by which it is approved. Templates for programme specifications, approval and review processes are appropriate. The process for modification is clear. External examiners receive the relevant programme specification(s) and are asked to confirm this in their annual reports. At five-yearly course reviews the programme specification is used as part of the evidence base. Staff whom the review team met demonstrated awareness of the importance and process of maintaining the definitive record.

1.32 The review team noted that there was evidence of inconsistency in the completeness of some of the programme specifications provided by the University. The review team, therefore, examined the process for approval of programme specifications. At the time the University introduced the NAM a single scrutiny group was established,

with membership drawn from the Learning and Teaching Committee, and Taught Programmes Policy Group, to review programme specifications and ensure compliance with the NAM. It was confirmed to the review team that this scrutiny group had been disbanded. Annual updates and minor changes are now made by the relevant Course Director, which are then approved by the School Teaching Director and do not formally feed into the University's committee structure. The review team **recommends** that the University take steps to address the approval and completeness of its programme specifications.

1.33 The University has module outlines for each taught module offered as part of a programme. It has recently introduced a revised module outline template, which is intended, among other things, to clarify links to key reference points. Students the review team met generally confirmed the accessibility, reliability and accuracy of the module information provided to them. Although they were aware that programme-level information was available, some students were less clear on how to find information relating to overall programme learning outcomes. This is explained more fully in section 4, where the review team recommends that the University effectively communicates information on programme learning outcomes to students.

1.34 The review team concludes that Expectation A2.2 is met, although further work is required regarding the approval and completeness of programme specifications. The associated level of risk is low because the University has processes in place that enable it to maintain a definitive record of approved programmes, qualifications and modules, which are accessible to key stakeholders and used as the reference point for delivery, assessment, monitoring and review of programmes

**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**

1.35 The NAM sets out requirements for level progression and the adoption of the level descriptors as described in the FHEQ. Programme specifications include details of how the programme meets the relevant programme descriptor from the FHEQ; these are designed in line with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and referenced in the Full Course Proposal Form.

1.36 There are clear processes for the approval of taught courses, which ensure standards meet threshold requirements and those of the University. Guidance notes incorporated within forms are regarded as setting approval criteria. There are explicit references to the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements in the documentation.

1.37 There is a staged approval process starting at school level, with scrutiny from Teaching Executives or committees of Course Directors. Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees (FLTQCs) and Faculty Executives consider academic and business cases, and the third stage is consideration by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), which has devolved authority from the Senate to approve courses. At all stages the forms require mapping of module intended learning outcomes to the course level. Module details accompany consideration of the academic case and are included in papers for the LTC.

1.38 Approval for any new or revised postgraduate research degree course is presented on the new postgraduate research degree course approval form and is considered at faculty level by the Faculty Graduate School Executives, and at University-level by the Postgraduate Research Executive (PGR Executive). Decisions made by the PGR Executive are reported to the LTC, ensuring consistency of approach with taught courses. The course approval process requires that the programme meets appropriate Quality Code Expectations, the University's own academic frameworks and regulations, and those of PSRBs where appropriate.

1.39 The University has mapped postgraduate research provision against doctoral and research master's degree qualification characteristics and the FHEQ in developing the Code of Practice for Research Degrees, and as part of the development of the Research Degree Education Strategy.

1.40 The University frameworks and processes enable the Expectation to be met.

1.41 The review team tested the University approach to the implementation of the credit framework through analysis of documentation, including key policy and framework documents, minutes of committees and course approval documents. The review team also met staff and students.

1.42 For the introduction of the NAM all programme specifications were rewritten to ensure alignment with the NAM, and therefore with the FHEQ. A single scrutiny group was formed from the LTC and Taught Programmes Policy Group to review the new programme

specifications and ensure compliance. Following implementation of the NAM, this Group was disbanded and scrutiny for new and amended programme specifications is managed through School Teaching Directors (see paragraph 1.32). Under Expectation A2.2 the review team recommends that the University take steps to address the approval and completeness of its programme specifications.

1.43 The Quality Code, Part A was the subject of a dedicated University-wide briefing workshop in October 2014. This was well attended by senior academic and administrative staff, and key role holders from all faculties and services with a responsibility for, or input into, programme design, approval and quality assurance.

1.44 Updates and consultation on the FHEQ and Quality Code are shared through relevant committees, and implementation of the Quality Code is checked through systematic mapping processes. The LTC considers published reports from QAA and HEFCE, including changes to the Quality Code and Subject Benchmarks Statements. PSRB reports are received by Teaching Committees.

1.45 Guidance for the development of course proposals and changes to courses refers staff to QAA benchmarks to ensure that the case addresses the relevant outcomes at each stage of study. Staff are familiar with Subject Benchmark Statements, and those met by the review team were able to articulate how they have used them in the design of programmes.

1.46 Course approvals are overseen through the LTC and FLTQCs, where detailed documentation is considered to inform decisions. These processes work effectively, and there is appropriate engagement with the processes to secure compliance with UK threshold standards and institutional expectations. In some cases there is detailed feedback from those required to comment. However, external consultation does not include feedback on how the courses fit within, for example, the FHEQ and meet Subject Benchmarks Statements. As noted in paragraphs 1.74 and 1.78, while external academics are involved in relevant programme design activities they are not directly involved in programme approval processes. Under Expectation A3.4 the review team makes a recommendation to ensure external academic expertise is consistently obtained, documented and considered.

1.47 Programme specifications include a mapping of learning outcomes to the type of assessment, although this does not necessarily indicate the level and these are not consistently mapped to programme outcomes. Programme level outcomes are variable and students are not in the main aware of them. However, they are fully familiar with module level outcomes.

1.48 The Medical Bachelor/Bachelor of Surgery programme specifications position the award at Level 7 of the FHEQ in accordance with its requirements. However, the programme contains no Level 7 modules, and the 2015 University regulations refer to this as a Level 6 award. Although the stated positioning of the award is set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification, it is less clear how outcomes at this level are in accordance with the University's own academic frameworks and regulations. Under Expectation A2.1 the review team recommends that the University take steps to address the inconsistencies.

1.49 Annual monitoring and update forms include a review of the currency, including learning outcomes and PSRB updates within which the review team also saw reference to Subject Benchmark Statements. Proposed changes to programmes incorporate the consideration and mapping (where relevant) of programmes to University regulations and PSRB requirements.

1.50 All schools convene an Annual Review of Assessment and Moderation where course teams review key datasets relating to assessment, ensuring consistent standards of

marking across and between programmes. There is evidence that this feeds into the annual monitoring process in the school reports. One example highlighted the need to review the programme specifications to ensure that module-level learning outcomes are clearly coupled to assessment demands and aligned with programme-level outcomes, and that these are reviewed to ensure ongoing alignment. This demonstrates continuing review of outcome levels at a modular and programme level.

1.51 The review team considers that the University has clear and effective processes for the approval of new programmes of study, which ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards. While processes could be strengthened with the inclusion of explicit external engagement in the approval process, and there is an anomaly regarding the University's stated position of the MBBS programme, programme approval processes are followed in accordance with internal academic frameworks and regulations. The review team concludes that the Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.52 Programme specifications and module outlines are required for all programmes and modules. The programme specification template includes a section on the assessment methods used in the programme, and these must be mapped against programme learning outcomes. The module outline template similarly requires that assessment methods are mapped against the module learning outcomes.

1.53 The University has a set of Senate Marking Scales, differentiated between undergraduate and taught postgraduate, and by broad mode of assessment. Work may also be marked using alternative assessment criteria tailored to the nature of specific pieces of assessment, with any alternative criteria approved at the relevant school Learning and Teaching Committee. The Senate Marking Scales are intended to ensure consistent standards across all faculties. The University's regulations clearly state common pass marks for all awards of a given type, and the University's regulations make appropriate reference to the role of learning outcomes in relation to assessment and the award of credit and qualifications.

1.54 There is a University policy on moderation of marking. This clearly states that one of the purposes of moderation is to ensure that assessed work has been marked in line with stated aims, learning outcomes and marking criteria, and that marking standards have been applied consistently. This policy also requires schools to undertake an Annual Review of Assessment and Moderation that considers these issues, alongside others.

1.55 The University's Code of Practice for External Examiner System for Awards (Taught Programmes) clearly states the role of the external examiner in overseeing the assessment process: serving as members of boards of examiners and coming to judgments on the alignment of academic standards with the expectations of the FHEQ. External examiners are required as part of their reports to confirm if the level and standard of student work is appropriate for the award(s) for which they are responsible.

1.56 The review team concludes that this approach enables the University to meet this Expectation. It explored the effectiveness of the implementation of this approach through consideration of relevant regulation, policies and regulations, including evidence from module and programme approval processes and external examining. It also discussed these issues in meetings with University staff.

1.57 Guidance notes for completing programme specifications and module outlines make clear that there should be an explicit link between the mode(s) of assessment employed and the stated learning outcomes. Examples of the completed programme specifications and module outlines demonstrate that links are being made.

1.58 Staff are also provided with guidance on the application of the Senate Marking Scales, and there is clear evidence of staff awareness of these scales and the way these should be implemented. Staff are also aware of the University's policy on the moderation of marking and its requirements, and the review team saw examples of the effective operation by schools of the Annual Review of Assessment and Moderation. It is evident, from their reports, that external examiners consider that they see an appropriate sample of student work. External examiner reports confirm that awards meet both the threshold standards set in the FHEQ, and are comparable with those of other UK higher education providers.

1.59 Overall, the review team found that the University has in place an appropriate framework for ensuring that learning outcomes must be met through assessment before credit or qualifications are awarded, and that this framework is operating effectively. Consequently, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.3): 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**

1.60 All courses are subject to annual monitoring and five-yearly course review. There is a clearly articulated procedure, operational guidance for annual and five-yearly review, and, where appropriate, flow charts and accompanying templates for annual and five-yearly review to facilitate the processes. Courses delivered in partnership with other providers have cognate review processes to achieve the same outcomes.

1.61 All courses are considered in the context of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the Quality Code. External examiners are specifically asked to confirm within their reports that threshold academic standards have been met. The University ensures that regulations, policies and guidance notes for validated courses are reviewed on an annual basis, with a systematic review taking place every five years.

1.62 In annual course monitoring, courses are evaluated to: inform quality enhancement activity; update the course where necessary; trigger module reviews for component modules where appropriate; and identify and share good practice.

1.63 Modules are reviewed at least once every five years or may be triggered for review in any given year. Triggers include: the school wishes to review the module; module monitoring recommended in five-yearly review and/or annual course monitoring; the module is new and within first two years of introduction; there is a new module organiser; there are changes to the module, which the Teaching Director considers should be evaluated; there have been concerns arising from previous module reviews that remain unresolved; there are issues arising from student module evaluation or arising from the annual student survey; or, if not triggered, there are staff within their probationary period undertaking substantial amounts of teaching on the module.

1.64 While the Annual Review of Assessment and Moderation might identify issues that can be addressed immediately prior to the start of the new academic year, it is primarily focused on long term strategic planning around assessment and moderation. The annual review aids in the rationalisation, streamlining and enhancing of assessment processes across undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.

1.65 The course review process is a rolling five-year quality assurance and enhancement review schedule that applies to all University courses. The process ensures that academic standards, learning outcomes, and learning, teaching and assessment methods are appropriate and made explicit to students at course level. Course review panels, which include student representatives and external members, reflect carefully on a range of provided data, including the outcomes of annual course monitoring in the period under review as part of the course review activity. Panels will make use of external reference points, such as relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and qualification characteristics, to ensure that the course under review continues to meet all relevant criteria for the award to which it leads.

1.66 Course reviews are conducted for all the University's research degree programmes, including the assurance ensure that programme learning outcomes align with the FHEQ for doctoral programmes.

1.67 These processes enable the Expectation to be met.

1.68 The review team considered a range of documents, including relevant policies, guidance, regulations, procedures and templates, samples of completed documents and reports to relevant committees, and met a range of staff with varying levels of responsibility and engagement in monitoring and review.

1.69 Annual monitoring and five-yearly course reviews consider internal and external benchmarks, student progression and completion data, and feedback from students and other stakeholders, in determining that academic standards are being maintained and are at the appropriate level. The Faculty Associate Deans and Postgraduate Research Executive closely monitor assessment submission and student completion rates, and feedback from funders, including research councils.

1.70 Appropriate use of external examiners, external reviews and PSRB reports supports the management of risk to standards. The role and responsibilities of external examiners relating to academic standards is clear and the report template ensures annual confirmation.

1.71 Monitoring and review processes confirm maintenance of academic standards, currency of the course and that courses are delivered in accordance with what has been approved. Compliance of schools in following the procedures is monitored, but this has highlighted some issues in the completion of annual monitoring that the University is working to address.

1.72 The application of the policies and procedures for internal quality monitoring are overseen through a review process managed through the Learning and Teaching Committee. Oversight of aspects of annual monitoring and periodic review is also supported through internal audit.

1.73 The review team considers that the University has appropriate processes for monitoring and reviewing the academic standards of programmes and that in the main these operate effectively. The University has in place processes for identifying where annual monitoring is not completed and is addressing compliance. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.74 Academic standards for courses are set through the University's process for approving new courses. This process includes a requirement for comments from an external academic, and, where appropriate, from the relevant PSRB, local employers or 'other' external experts. The proposal form for new courses includes a specific section where this external feedback needs to be included in new course proposals. However, there are no structured requirements within this section of the proposal form that require externals to comment on the alignment of proposed programmes to key external reference points such as the FHEQ or Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.75 External examiners have clear responsibilities to oversee the setting and achievement of academic standards in line with the University's stated academic standards and those set out in the Quality Code, Part A. Externality is also embedded within the University's course review process. Each review team includes a subject specialist external to the University, who must not be an external examiner. An employer may serve as an external member of a review team, but should this happen a second external member, who is an academic from an institution is also appointed, with the Learning and Teaching Service ensuring that this happens.

1.76 This approach enables the Expectation to be met.

1.77 The review team looked at the effectiveness with which this approach is being implemented, by reviewing documentation considered through the University's course approval process; the role played by external examiners in monitoring academic standards; and the use of externality in the course review process.

1.78 The examples of new course proposals considered by the review team demonstrated inconsistency in the involvement of external expertise. There was clear evidence of appropriate and effective externality in terms of consultation with employers and PSRBs where this was appropriate (see paragraph 2.14 for further details). Comment from external examiners was also evident in some of the completed course proposals, but not all of these examples included comment from the external academic on the alignment of the proposed course with key reference points such as the FHEQ. In a number of cases there was no documented evidence of consultation with external academics within the completed course approval form. Discussions during the review visit confirmed that robust external consultation takes place with employers and PSRBs, but a number of the references to the involvement of external academics referred to consultation as part of the programme design process rather than contributions to the approval process carried out by Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees, and the Learning and Teaching Committee. Consequently, the review team **recommends** that the University ensure that external academic expertise is consistently obtained, documented and considered as part of the course approval process to verify threshold academic standards and to demonstrate that the appropriate external reference points have been considered.

1.79 Sample external examiner reports scrutinised by the review team demonstrate that external examining is playing an effective role in maintaining academic standards. External examiners are required to confirm that the standard of student work is consistent with the FHEQ and academic standards at comparable universities. Examples of reports from five-yearly course reviews also confirm the role played by the external in the process, and that reports from external examiners formed part of the evidence base for the reviews.

1.80 Overall, effective policies and processes are in place to ensure the appropriate use of externality in setting and maintaining academic standards. Consequently, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met. There is, however, evidence of inconsistency in the way in which external academic expertise is utilised within the new course approval process. Given the importance of this process in the initial setting of academic standards for a programme, this current inconsistency means that the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

1.82 The University has effective mechanisms for the setting and maintenance of academic standards. All Expectations are met, and all, apart from Expectation A3.4, have a low associated risk.

1.83 The review team makes three recommendations to the University to: take steps to address inconsistencies in its stated positioning of the Medical Bachelor/Bachelor of Surgery award; address the approval and completeness of programme specifications; and ensure external academic expertise is used effectively in course approval processes. The University has introduced a New Academic Model to address historic inconsistencies across schools and curriculum areas, and is aware of the need to further ensure consistency and full implementation. The associated risks with the first two recommendations is therefore deemed to be low. The lack of effective external academic expertise in course approval represents a moderate risk to Expectation A3.4. This Expectation is, however, met, as there is effective consultation with employers and PSRBs where appropriate, and external examiners and academics are consulted on curriculum design, although this is not consistent.

1.84 There are links to two other recommendations in this section concerned with the review of assessment board regulations (Expectation B6), and communicating effectively to students' information on their programme learning outcomes (Expectation C). The risks associated with these recommendations and the associated Expectations is considered to be low.

1.85 The review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at the University **meet** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 The University provides clear and comprehensive guidance on course design and approval, which includes the use of external reference points. There are approved standard processes, which were last reviewed 2012-13 and considered by Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees (FLTQCs), Taught Programmes Policy Group, and the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC).

2.2 The University ensures that its processes for programme design, development and approval are evaluated on a regular basis through their inclusion in the University's learning and teaching schedule of reviews.

2.3 Consideration of new courses or programmes of study begins at school level with Teaching Executives or Committees of Course Directors providing the initial scrutiny of new proposals. A further level of detailed scrutiny, of both the academic case and of the viability of the business case, occurs at faculty level within the relevant FLTQC and Faculty Executive.

2.4 In cases where schools of study are proposing the approval of a new course with resource implications, they are required to complete the Full Course Approval Form. In cases where only minor amendments are being proposed with limited or no resource implications, and new courses with no resource implications, schools complete the Minor Changes Course Proposal Form.

2.5 Following scrutiny by the School Board and Faculty Executive, schools indicate their intentions for new areas of provision to the Secretary of the Planning and Resources Committee for consideration by the appropriate University bodies. These then undergo the standard approval process, and a proposal is submitted to the Secretary of the LTC for approval, in principle, by the LTC. New courses approved by the LTC are reported to the Senate, which has ultimate authority for academic programmes within the University. Detailed scrutiny is conducted by the Postgraduate Research Executive for new research programmes presented on the Postgraduate Research Course Proposal Form.

2.6 For proposed changes to courses schools are expected to seek guidance and feedback from external examiners and/or other external experts. External comments and PSRB approval are included in the course approval documentation. Externals comment on aspects such as distinctiveness, learning outcomes, curriculum design, delivery, assessment arrangements and employability. Student engagement in the development of new courses takes place at all levels: at school level through Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs), through student representation on FLTQCs, and the LTC.

2.7 Collaborative course approval routes are clear and covered under Expectation B10 (see paragraphs 2.148 to 2.150 for further details). New postgraduate research proposals are broadly similar to those for taught courses.

2.8 The scrutiny and approval of new modules sits with the School Teaching Director. Key Information Set data is collected on module outlines.

2.9 The University's course closure policy requires schools to ensure that the interests of students on courses that are to be closed are protected. Where courses are closed to new entrants, any current students will be taught and supported through to the completion of their studies. The LTC receives and approves reports of course closures.

2.10 These processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.11 The review team scrutinised processes and their effectiveness through consideration of relevant documentation - for example: policies, processes and staff guidance, course proposals and minutes of committee meetings - and held meetings with staff and students.

2.12 The LTC receive, review and grant approval for new awards and new courses when requirements are considered met, and sign off final approval when conditions are complete. Course proposal forms, incorporating the programme's specification and approval reports, are published on the LTC website.

2.13 The course proposal forms, and the guidance and procedures, provide support for staff in the process of undertaking new course approval and course amendments. The University's Centre for Staff and Educational Development runs a number of courses relating to programme design and development. Clear definitions of roles of individuals within the process ensure consistency, and the approval routes from school to University levels are clearly specified, with fast-track options available where necessary and appropriate.

2.14 The review team saw evidence of, and heard from staff about, rich dialogue with and input from experts from industry, other academic institutions and with external examiners during the process of new course design or major course review. Some teams have set up industry advisory panels that have supported developments and continue to provide external input to strengthen employability. The proposal forms in the main provide evidence of this consultation with external advisers, who may be external examiners and or externals from industry. As discussed in paragraph 1.78, there was evidence of inconsistency in course approval forms seen by the review team in relation to comment from external academics. Under Expectation A3.4 the review team makes a recommendation to address this.

2.15 Consultation with students on programme design and modifications is described by students as patchy and does not consistently happen. The review team saw evidence that, where proposals would not directly impact on current students, consultation had not been considered necessary. However, there are positive examples of students engaging and impacting on the design of curricula. Student representatives sit on FLTQCs, where new proposals are discussed, and some are discussed in SSLCs.

2.16 Students are represented in plans for the closure of programmes and provision, however, there are some circumstances where commercial sensitivity excludes students from the early review processes. Students are represented on closure monitoring groups. The review team was unable to consistently identify student engagement in processes, as not all course closure forms indicate whether students have been consulted. In evidence seen by the review team students' concerns were addressed in meetings.

2.17 Changes to programmes are made annually following annual monitoring. Programme specifications are updated and approved by the School Teaching Director, following completion of the annual monitoring process. Course Directors are required to

consider whether the modules to be offered make a coherent contribution to the course, and whether there are any areas of overlap or gaps. Changes of up to 50 per cent can be made at any one level and changes of up to 25 per cent can be made to the total programme. Oversight of the cumulative changes of programmes is managed through the historical record of programme specifications, is dependent on the scrutiny of the School Teaching Director, and would be assessed in five-yearly course review. The lack of oversight risks ongoing changes to programmes fundamentally changing the nature of a programme. Examples of change to programmes provided by students gave evidence that significant changes to programmes had impacted on their programme in such a way that it did not fully reflect the title or content of the programme to which they had originally signed up. This was particularly highlighted by students that had spent a year out of their studies who, on return, had only found out about changes to their programme when they tried to make their module choices.

2.18 The regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes make provision for students to study modules outside of their programme through a concession route, but this does not apply to core or compulsory modules. Deviations from programme modules are approved on an individual basis through the Course Director and the Head of School, and managed through the Hub. Students are aware of this opportunity and some of those met by the review team had followed this process. However, some of the postgraduate taught students met had experienced problems in accessing their core modules due to modules not running because of staff absence or departure, and modules that are too full. Therefore, they had to select modules from outside of their programme. This was not a managed process and students had to use the module option selection process to find out which modules were running and those that were not, and some had difficulty accessing any relevant modules. Staff confirmed that there had been problems offering modules in one school where there are high numbers of courses with low student numbers, and this area is currently under review. On the programme specification there is a statement that, while the University will make every effort to offer the modules listed, changes may sometimes have to be made for reasons outside of the University's control, such as staff illness, low enrolment or sabbatical leave.

2.19 The lack of oversight of changes to programmes and the deviation from core or mandatory modules on some programmes risks ongoing changes to programmes fundamentally changing the nature of a programme. The review team therefore **recommends** that the University ensure effective oversight and monitoring of cumulative changes and deviations to programmes.

2.20 Overall, the review team considers that the University operates sound processes for the design and development of programmes, but should incorporate external scrutiny in the approval process. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is therefore met. The associated level of risk is moderate, as there is a lack of formal processes for the monitoring of cumulative changes to programmes, the approval of minor changes to programmes, and the use of the deviation process outside of the regulations to manage resource issues. Oversight is vested in a single post-holder at school level, and is this not monitored through the deliberative committee structure. The University is, however, working to resolve the problems that have led to inappropriate use of deviation and recognised the exposure connected to their current approach to monitoring cumulative changes.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

**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**

2.21 The University has a clear admissions policy, which is guided by the University Corporate Plan, and underpinned by the Recruitment Strategy, and the International Strategy. This is monitored by the University Admissions and Recruitment Executive Team, and the Postgraduate Research Executive.

2.22 As well as admissions being overseen at an institutional level, schools monitor admissions through the School Board and/or admissions group. School Admissions Directors and Associate Deans of Admissions review entry criteria on an annual basis, and the University has developed central guidance to ensure fairness in decision making across the schools.

2.23 The University undertakes interviews for a number of courses. The Interview Policy is clearly available on the University's website for prospective students to access. There is also specific guidance available for the process of interviewing for medical courses.

2.24 There is a clear accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) policy within the University academic calendar, which details permitted exemptions. APEL applications are considered by two members of academic staff from the school. As well as a portfolio, an interview may be required. The Schools of Health Science, and Education and Lifelong Learning have delegated authority to approve applications of behalf of the Learning and Teaching Committee.

2.25 Information for prospective students is available on the University's website, as well as on UCAS. Course pages detail key information such as entry requirements, fees, scholarship information and notional additional course costs. The University also provides information for prospective students to complain or appeal an admissions decision through a public-facing webpage.

2.26 The University has developed a clear and separate admissions process for postgraduate research students for a variety of different funding scenarios, including self-funding students and fast-track proposals.

2.27 The University sets out a strategy for recruitment and admissions, and this is monitored through a University-wide Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing Committee (ARM Executive) as well as more localised committees at a faculty level. There is a cascade management model to ensure that schools are managing their admissions processes effectively and are adhering to University central guidance, as well as policies and procedures that support the fair and equitable treatment of students. These systems and processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.28 The review team considered a range of documentation, including minutes and terms of reference of University committees, and policies and procedures relating to the admission of students, and also reviewed the University website. The review team also met

undergraduate and postgraduate students, and professional and academic staff, and senior managers.

2.29 Admissions targets and strategies are discussed at many levels of the University. Each faculty has an admissions group, which reports into the Faculty Executive committee for undergraduate admissions; postgraduate admissions are reviewed at the relevant Graduate School Executive. The University monitors its policies and procedures annually, and these approved by the ARM Executive.

2.30 Staff development is provided to admissions staff, and guidance is available to ensure that students are treated fairly. Interviews are conducted in accordance with the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions good practice statement. The University has developed its own guidance document for schools to use and provides training for staff undertaking interviews.

2.31 The University ensures an appropriate admissions process is in place for students applying to a partner college through the due diligence process, ensuring partners have appropriate admissions policies in place that align to University central admissions practices. The University also has a number of progression agreements with partners, which enable students to apply for places on their courses. These do not, however, provide automatic access to students from partner institutions.

2.32 The review team found that clear information is provided to students on the University website, including course level information, how to apply, and information about open days and applicant days. Students confirmed that the information and support available to them at the application stage meets their needs. The review team also found a considered approach to supporting applications of student with disabilities through the Dean of Students' Office, and this contributes to the good practice identified in paragraph 2.53.

2.33 The University has admissions and recruitment policies and procedures in place to ensure the equitable treatment of students. Procedures are well understood by staff, and policies and strategies are regularly monitored and revised. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.34 The strategic context for the University's educational provision is set by its Learning and Teaching Strategy, and by its Research Degree Education Strategy, both of which are supported by implementation plans. Responsibility for learning and teaching rests with the Senate, which has delegated authority to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), and which is in turn supported by the Postgraduate Research Executive (PGR Executive), Student Experience Committee (SEC), Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees, and Faculty Graduate School Executives. Within this framework there are a range of key post holders with responsibilities for learning and teaching. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) are responsible respectively for taught and research provision. They are supported by six Academic Directors with defined portfolios, and each faculty has Associate Deans with responsibility for learning and teaching, employability, and postgraduate research. Within the University's schools, there are defined roles for School Directors of Learning and Teaching, Course Directors and module organisers. This framework enables the Expectation to be met.

2.35 The effectiveness of this approach and framework was tested by the review team through the consideration of relevant policies and strategies, documentation from key committees, and a range of materials relating to staff development and support. The review team also met academic and professional services staff and students (including research students who have taught on University programmes).

2.36 The University points to its New Academic Model (NAM) as 'the cornerstone' of its implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The NAM has been implemented with effect from the undergraduate cohort admitted in 2013-14, and work on developing NAM proposals for taught postgraduate provision will start in 2015-16 for implementation in 2016-17. A clear framework, including consideration of a range of relevant and valid data, is in place to evaluate the implementation of the NAM. It was clear from documentation seen by the review team and from discussions during the review visit that the NAM has acted as a spur for the development of learning and teaching policy and practice at the University. Examples of this include the increased use of formative assessment to support student development and the development of more innovative approaches to assessment.

2.37 Meetings with staff demonstrated appropriate awareness of the University's strategic objectives in learning and teaching. There are regular reports on the implementation of strategies, and key performance indicators have been agreed, against which progress is measured. The LTC and the PGR Executive consider a range of appropriate data on the quality of the University's learning, teaching and research degree provision, for example: results of the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, and the University's own Student Experience Survey; undergraduate degree classification data; research student submission rates; and graduate employability. There is also evidence of effective consideration of such data at school level. Learning and teaching policies and procedures are reviewed regularly in line with agreed schedules, with the working groups undertaking

these reviews including student representation. The review team saw evidence of the effective implementation of this approach.

2.38 Recruitment of academic staff with teaching responsibilities involves consideration of their competence in this area, and newly appointed staff undertake appropriate, Higher Education Academy-recognised, initial professional development, as well as having an experienced mentor appointed. There are clear training requirements for research students who undertake teaching and assessment on University programmes, which have recently been revised by the University, working in conjunction with the Students' Union. Provision is appropriate, and the research students the review team met confirmed that these requirements were, in their experience, met.

2.39 A wide range of continuing professional development in learning and teaching is made available through the Centre for Staff and Educational Development, which also supports staff attendance at relevant external conferences on pedagogic issues. Additionally, there is an annual learning and teaching day that provides opportunities to discuss and reflect on educational practice. Training and development opportunities relating to key posts in the management of learning and teaching are also made available. Meetings with staff and samples of documentation from these events and opportunities confirmed the usefulness of this provision.

2.40 All staff take part in Appraisal and Performance Review, which includes opportunities for staff to reflect on their learning and teaching. Staff the review team met confirmed that appraisal takes place, and that learning and teaching issues are considered within the process. There is also a University Code of Practice on Peer Observation of Teaching, which requires all staff to be observed at least biennially and staff on probation to be observed annually. Staff confirmed that this takes place, with observations often being undertaken more frequently than required by the University's Code. Faculties report to the LTC on the operation of peer observation. Implementation of peer observation is less consistent in relation to research students who teach, potentially reducing both the oversight of the quality of this teaching and the professional development research students gain from teaching.

2.41 The strategic framework for the development of learning resources is provided by the commitments in the University's Corporate Plan, and Learning and Teaching Strategy, to provide a high quality learning and teaching environment, with provision of learning resources considered by SEC under the oversight of the LTC. Within this framework a number of investments have been made in the University's physical infrastructure in recent years to enhance learning spaces, and there have also been a number of developments in the provision of information services (such as the introduction of 24-hour opening in the library). Students confirmed that appropriate learning resources are in place, and examples were given of the involvement of students in the development of projects to improve the physical learning environment.

2.42 The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy contains a clear commitment to enhance the use of Technology Enhanced Learning. It has created a new Academic Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement role, and has made a number of investments to support developments in this area. Students and staff reported examples of where Technology Enhanced Learning is being used in more creative ways to support new approaches to teaching, and significant progress has been made in areas such as the online submission of coursework.

2.43 The University's expectations for student engagement in their learning are set out in General Regulation 13, and also articulated in the Student Charter. These expectations are clear, and processes such as induction and the Academic Adviser system support students

to engage with their learning. There was, however, evidence from the review team's meetings with students that they are often unaware of their programme learning outcomes and therefore may not always be clear how the different parts of their programme relate to each other and fit together. These issues are considered further in the section of this report relating to the Quality Code, Part C.

2.44 The review team found that the University has appropriate arrangements to ensure that it puts in place, reviews and enhances the learning opportunities it provides to students. The review team concludes therefore that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.45 The strategic framework for enabling student development and achievement is set by the University's Corporate Plan, and its Learning and Teaching, and Research Degree Education Strategies. Responsibility for this area rests with the Senate, but strategic oversight is exercised by the Learning and Teaching Committee, supported by subcommittees such as the SEC. This is in turn supported by a Student Affairs Group, which considers a wide range of issues.

2.46 The University's commitment to equality and diversity is set out in its Single Equality Scheme, supported by a Single Equality Action Plan, with an Equality and Diversity Committee overseeing these. Resources have been put in place to support staff, including a webpage, an online training module and staff development courses.

2.47 The design of this approach enables the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the effectiveness of the implementation of this approach through the consideration of a wide range of strategy and policy documents, committee minutes and papers, and other documentation relating to supporting student development and achievement. The review team also met students, and with academic and professional services staff.

2.48 Effective oversight of this area takes place through the University's deliberative structures as described above. This also takes place through the consideration of a range of appropriate data on the student learning experience, as set out in relation to Expectation B3 (see paragraphs 2.36 and 2.37).

2.49 The University addresses the inclusivity of its learning opportunities by including in its Course Approval Form sections on the steps taken to design an inclusive curriculum (including learning and teaching methods), with all such proposals being subject to consultation with the Equality and Diversity Manager. There is support available from the Dean of Student's Office on such issues, and processes are in place to consider the need for reasonable adjustments where needed.

2.50 The University provides a range of appropriate information for applicants and those students holding offers. Following arrival further information is provided to students, and there is a range of induction activities that are provided both centrally and at school level. The University reviews its activities in this area, and a number of steps have been taken to address issues identified through these reviews. These have been effective, although meetings with students suggested that there are still some issues relating to the induction of non-standard students (for example, undergraduate students entering at level 5, and those joining in the spring term) that the University needs to keep under review.

2.51 There is a wide range of provision to support students in developing their academic skills, including their digital literacy. This is available through the library and the Dean of Students' Office, in addition to that provided to students by schools. Students the review team met were aware, and spoke highly of, the effectiveness of this provision. There are also Learning and Teaching Hubs that provide support for the administrative aspects of the student experience.

2.52 An Academic Adviser scheme is in place for taught students. All students are appointed an Academic Adviser whose role is 'to support students in achieving their

academic and personal development and prepare students for graduate employment or further study'. Each school also has a Senior Adviser and a Disability Liaison Officer who support the implementation of the scheme at school level. Both online training and face-to-face development opportunities are in place for Academic Advisers. Students meet their Advisers as part of induction, and the expectation is that students meet with their advisers three times per academic year. Staff and students the review team met confirmed the important role that Academic Advisers play. The system is functioning effectively, and students frequently referred to the high quality of support they received from Academic Advisers across a number of issues.

2.53 The Dean of Students' Office provides a range of student support services, with the University noting a year-on-year increase in student use of these services. The University has taken steps to increase the resources for this area in light of increased demand. The provision of support and services is comprehensive, and the students the review team met spoke highly of the quality and responsiveness of this support. Consequently, the review team considers the significant contribution made by Academic Advisers and the Dean of Students' Office in supporting the development and achievement of students to be **good practice**.

2.54 The University supports the career management and employability of students through a range of provision: both central services, such as the Careers Service, and activities within schools. There has been significant investment in this area in recent years, reflecting its strategic importance to the University, and action plans are in place both centrally for the Careers Service and in faculties. An Employability Executive has been established to ensure the strategic development of the University's approach, and this has been supported by the creation of academic leadership roles at institutional, faculty and school levels with responsibility for delivering this approach. There are clear examples of the positive impact of this approach in areas such as placement provision, internships and the embedding of employability in the curriculum (also see the commentary on the Theme). The review team considers the strategic approach that is being taken to enhance the employability of students to be **good practice**.

2.55 The University's approach to supporting and enabling the development of students is well designed, and effective in its implementation. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.56 The University has articulated a commitment to a partnership approach between staff and students through the LTC and Student Charter. This is implemented through the Code of Practice on Student Representation, which has recently been revised.

2.57 Students are represented at an institutional level on a variety of University committees, including the Senate, Council, LTC, SEC, Employability Executive and Postgraduate Research Executive. Students also sit in a variety of institutional working groups and executive committees, and are members of five-yearly course review boards.

2.58 At a faculty and school level, students are members of the school SSLCs, Research Student Forums, School Boards, and FLTQCs. The Vice-Chancellor also regularly meets with groups of students.

2.59 The University considers national and local student survey data such as the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and internal Student Experience Survey, primarily through FLTQCs and the SEC.

2.60 Course representatives are elected through each school, and training is provided centrally by the Students' Union. Students are able to feed back to the University through module evaluation questionnaires, which feed into annual course monitoring.

2.61 These structures and processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.62 The review team tested the effectiveness of the structures and processes through consideration of minutes of University committees, evidence of course representative selection and training, meetings with students and staff, and evidence of annual and five-yearly course review.

2.63 While it is clear from University and faculty committee and executive group minutes that students are members of the deliberative committees, the review team heard that students do not always feel a partner in institutional decision making due to the divisions in deliberative and executive decision making. This is coupled with variance of practice between the different schools and faculties in the implementation of their approach to engaging students as partners within their deliberative and management structures.

2.64 In some schools the expectations set out in the University Code of Practice on Student Representation are met at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level, however, in some cases implementation of the previous version of the code of practice and subsequent revision is patchy. Undergraduate and postgraduate representatives that the review team met did not always feel supported or prepared for their role. Data provided demonstrates a lack of communication between some schools and the Students' Union, which can restrict student representative access to the help and support provided by the Students' Union. While the Code of Practice clearly states that SSLC officers are responsible for ensuring course representatives receive adequate support and training, there was no clear evidence of improvement in this area at the time of review. The new faculty role of Student Partnership Officer is tasked with ensuring the Code of Practice is implemented effectively, including facilitating course representative training by the Students' Union. The review team heard examples from both staff and students of how this role, which is

supported by the Students' Union, is making a positive impact within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, although not all Student Partnerships Officers have yet been appointed. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to implement the Code of Practice on Student Representation to enable students to contribute to the management and enhancement of their programmes.

2.65 While the process for student engagement is not uniform across faculties, staff and students the review team met gave examples of student feedback driving institutional change, including the collection of data on additional course costs, anonymous submission of coursework and postgraduate research student engagement with the library. Students commented that they are able to give feedback on their modules, although it is not always clear to them how this information is used to enhance their course. The University is currently trialling a number of different approaches to module evaluation, including in-module feedback with students and publishing results of module evaluation feedback. However, publication of results has not been possible in all areas due to a lack of resources to support this activity.

2.66 The University requires student feedback collected through SSLCs, module evaluation and less formal mechanisms to be used in annual course reports; it was, however, unclear to the review team how this data is used in the annual evaluation. Of the annual reports submitted, only two contained references to student feedback in the report. Similarly, while it was clear to the review team that in some cases students are involved in five-yearly course reviews, this is inconsistent, and no training is provided to students who undertake this activity.

2.67 The University has recently reviewed the implementation of its Code of Practice on Student Representation, and is putting in place steps to ensure that historical variation of student engagement practices within the schools and faculties is addressed. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The level of associated risk is deemed to be low, as the University is aware of the variability in practice and is taking steps to address this through the design and implementation of the revised Code, and the appointment of Student Partnerships Officers to support this.

**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**

2.68 Assessment practice is governed by the general and awards regulations set out in the University's Academic Calendar.

2.69 Programme specifications and module outlines set out the assessment strategy for each course, with a mapping document providing information on how course and module learning outcomes interrelate and contribute to the overall award. There is clear guidance to staff on programme specifications and assessment. Assessment design is informed by external reference points. Students are provided with guidance describing how the University seeks to ensure equitable treatment.

2.70 The NAM incorporated a number of changes to regulations and assessments to improve consistency across schools and reduce inconsistent outcomes for students. These included an algorithm to address borderline candidates, revised postgraduate taught and postgraduate research marking scales, the rounding up of marks and moderation and double marking.

2.71 Regulations for bachelor's and integrated master's awards, and for master's awards in the Common Master's Framework, are aligned with the FHEQ; this is confirmed in external examiners' reports.

2.72 Details of assessment (formative and summative), submission and return dates, and format of feedback are provided on the module outline and in school handbooks. Taught programme students are provided with an online personalised calendar containing information about the assessment profile for each of their modules through the online portal. Online marking and assessment is being introduced in 2015.

2.73 Coursework marking is anonymised and marked with reference to a consistent set of approved Senate Marking Scales. Consistent marking scales for postgraduate and undergraduate taught programmes are approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC). Internal moderation is applied where it is not blind double marked, in line with the internal moderation and double-marking policy.

2.74 Students' module marks are reported to the relevant Module Board and, where students have met the requirement of a pass for the modules in question, credit is awarded accordingly. At the completion of each stage of study, student progression is considered and determined by Stage Exam Boards.

2.75 The University has a policy for exam feedback implemented from 2012-13. Feedback must include basic statistics and qualitative comments but is only required at cohort level, not for individuals.

2.76 The University recently refreshed its accreditation of prior learning processes, considering both applications for accreditation of prior experiential learning and accreditation for certificated learning. The main objective of the informal review was to smooth the flow of

information between all parties - applicant; school; Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing Executive; and the Learning and Teaching Service (LTS) - and ensure that all parties understand their responsibilities. Clear guidance is available to support candidates in their application.

2.77 These frameworks and processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.78 The review team explored the effectiveness of the University's processes for assessment and recognition of prior learning through the review of documentation, including the relevant frameworks and codes of practice, minutes of internal meetings and external examiner reports. The review team also conducted meetings with staff and students.

2.79 Assessment practice is governed by the general and awards regulations set out in the University's Academic Calendar available on the website. These are accessible to staff, students and other stakeholders, and contain comprehensive rules covering, for example: examination boards, requirements for awards, progression requirements and classification rules.

2.80 The intent of the NAM is to provide clear and consistent rules, regulations and assessment procedures. The first evaluation of the new award regulations conducted by the Head of LTS, reporting to the LTC, demonstrates a broad spectrum of responses from being very positive to having major concerns. There are indications that the changes may have increased the percentage of students failing, but it is also noted that the move to reassessing each unit of assessment provides a greater opportunity for students to pass and achieve a better mark overall. There is a greater emphasis on formative assessment, but prescriptive approaches to the balance between formative and summative assessment appears to be problematic for some disciplines. However, it is used in all modules in some schools.

2.81 The students the review team met were not all familiar with their programme regulations or knew where to access the information. Those who receive programme handbooks are provided with the information directly and there are links in the University handbook, which is available on the website, to online information on regulations. However, not all students were aware of these links, and suggested that they would go to the website but described it as being difficult to navigate.

2.82 Formative assessments and the opportunity to build in regular feedback for students is working well in many areas. In some areas students that fail a formative piece of work receive a follow-up tutorial to reflect on their performance and identify how to improve. Students the review team met particularly welcome formative assessment that is closely aligned to their summative assessment and acknowledged the benefits to their progress and achievement. However, in other areas there is limited formative assessment opportunity, and where it does exist some students expressed concerns with the consistency in how it is managed and the associated penalties. Some annual monitoring reports describe take-up of formative assessment as low and indicate a lack of clarity as to whether all modules can be required to include formative feedback. In some schools this is the practice, with all summative work supported by a formative piece.

2.83 A mix of assessment methods is used that tests students' knowledge, understanding and skills in diverse ways; requires students to develop the ability to engage with different academic and professional contexts; and enables students to succeed across a diverse range of learning styles. Learning outcomes are mapped to assessment types in programme specifications, although these do not consistently demonstrate the level at which they are assessed.

2.84 A new set of guidance for staff on assessment and feedback, titled Senate Guidance on Assessment and Feedback, was approved in May 2015. A major focus to

enhance student feedback is on feed forward, ensuring that students are able to apply their feedback to future assessments.

2.85 The Norwich Business School has a method for assessment that includes the provision of: marking criteria in advance, formative assessment with feedback, and feed forward. The philosophy is now part of each new member of staff's induction, and has been explained in staff development sessions; is it also part of the quality assurance reporting process, the Annual Review of Assessment and Moderation process, and the biennial peer observation exercise. Other courses have redesigned assessments to facilitate feed-forward and to improve the assessment scheduling across the course.

2.86 Clear assessment and progression criteria are in place, although these may not always be clear to the students, and students do have concerns about variability in staff interpretation of the criteria. However, recent five-yearly course review reports suggest that this has improved. Assessment details and marking criteria are provided to students in their module handbooks.

2.87 An LTC evaluation of the introduction of online submission and feedback reports that it does not appear to have improved the students' perception of assessment and feedback, although it has been received well by staff. However, the evaluation considered that the concerns expressed by students are not necessarily with respect to the electronic feedback but may rather be reflective of students' demand for thorough, consistent and timely feedback, which is also suggested in a course review. Students met by the review team stated that positive benefits of online submission are at times reduced by an inconsistent requirement for online and paper copies. However, implementation has been effective in some areas and has improved students' ability to understand how to improve their performance.

2.88 All work is double marked using assessment sheets and guidelines that have been shared with students beforehand, or single-marked and moderated in line with University regulations. Standardised feedback sheets have been implemented in some parts of the University with a focus on feed-forward, and this has led to improved scores for assessment and feedback in the National Student Survey.

2.89 The Student Experience Report in 2012 highlighted the need for feedback on exams which was subsequently introduced. In the annual Students' Union survey in 2014 only 30 per cent of respondents said that they had received feedback, and of those that did 52 per cent found it 'neither helpful' or 'unhelpful'. It was also reported that only a small number of students enquired about the feedback and that the generic feedback was not thought to be helpful as it required more detail. However, the review team saw evidence and heard from students about positive experiences in receiving exam feedback. Generic feedback in exams was introduced in 2012-13 and individualised feedback was identified as the next step. In May 2015 the LTC agreed that where possible students should be given access to their exam script and receive individual feedback when requested. This is not available to postgraduate taught students as they are not yet included within the NAM; postgraduate taught students the review team met would welcome feedback in line with that provided for undergraduate students.

2.90 The Learning and Teaching Hubs carefully track the progress of coursework through each stage of the process and provide management information to academic colleagues (for example Teaching Directors and Associate Deans) at regular points throughout the semester. This provides an opportunity for action to be taken at a local level to improve marking times, where necessary.

2.91 The LTC has set out expectations of support for students preparing for reassessment to ensure consistency across schools. In their May 2015 review of

reassessment the LTC noted that some students were not having academic support when undertaking reassessment and agreed that this would be in place for all students for 2015 reassessments. Increasingly, students are now offered support for reassessment.

2.92 The review team saw and heard about many examples of improved practice in assessment, marking and feedback, and progress towards greater consistency is evident, although some students the team met described ongoing inconsistencies in the implementation of the new policies and arrangements. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to improve consistency in assessment, marking and feedback.

2.93 All schools convene an Annual Review of Assessment and Moderation, where course teams review key datasets relating to assessment, ensuring consistent standards of marking across and between programmes. These feed into a broader school annual course monitoring report received by the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees, and include lessons to be learned and good practice. The use of moderation is an area that is improving but there is still some progress to be made in the consistency of moderation and double-marking.

2.94 Support is available to staff for the implementation of assessment and feedback policies and procedures, through such materials as Exam Feedback: Some Guiding Principles and Examples of Good Practice, and new coursework submission and return process. This was informed by a National Union of Students document shared with the University by the Students' Union: Outstanding Practice in Assessment and Feedback.

2.95 Students welcome the new arrangements for extenuating circumstances and the use of self-certification, and find the system works well. However, students met by the review team, and the student written submission, suggest that there are some concerns with respect to the consistency of the process and about the information available. Legitimate use of the process has been questioned in relation to stress related to 'academic work pressure' where assessment deadlines coincide. Consistency of adjustments is managed through cross representation across extenuating circumstances panels.

2.96 The University operates a re-mark policy, which is distinct from a formal appeal, whereby students can request a re-mark where coursework has been marked by a single person, provided they have one of the required reasons. Work is then re-marked independently by a second marker before being sent to the School Director (Teaching and Learning) for a final decision. Students understanding and awareness of this opportunity is limited although the review team met some students who were fully familiar with the system and had used it successfully. The University recognises that this system needs to be more effectively notified to students.

2.97 The University's regulations permit the award of starred firsts for exceptional merit. Each assessment board establishes its own criteria for the award, and practice across schools is inconsistent. The University recognises the need for a more consistent approach, and had planned to present a paper to the June meeting of the LTC. However, this did not take place and the issue of starred firsts has not been addressed to date.

2.98 Integrated master's courses require different marks for progression both across courses and within courses varying from 40 to 60 per cent. This has been considered by the LTC but it was unclear to the review team how this reflected the principle of equality of treatment for all students.

2.99 Furthermore, assessment boards have discretion within the regulations to allow resits for students who had failed modules, and the review team was informed that this had been applied across boards. However, the review team was not fully satisfied that decisions were consistently made and applied, although they were informed that the Hub

administrators disseminate decisions taken and maintain an overview of the operation of assessment boards providing a mechanism to support consistency.

2.100 The review team therefore **recommends** that the University review assessment board regulations and their application to ensure greater consistency and equity of treatment of students.

2.101 Overall, the review team considers that the University operates processes and practice that enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the learning outcomes. Significant changes have been introduced to enhance practice but the speed at which new and emerging practice is implemented is variable and there remains noticeable inconsistencies. Programme regulations include assessment board discretion and include some potential inequity in the treatment of students on different programmes. The University is aware of the inconsistencies and is seeking to address these through the deliberative committee structure, and the review team recommends that the University review assessment board regulations in the regard. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.102 The University's Code of Practice for External Examiner System of Awards (Taught Programmes), defines the purpose of this system, the duties of external examiners and how the system should operate. Following the publication of the Quality Code, *Chapter B7* the University mapped its Code of Practice against *Chapter B7* and revised it in light of this mapping. It continues to keep the Code of Practice under review.

2.103 External examiners are appointed by chairs of the FLTQCs exercising their delegated authority on behalf of the Senate, with appointments considered against clear and appropriate criteria. Appointments are made for one year, renewable for up to four years in total. Induction and support for external examiners is provided by a combination of central University services, and the schools to which external examiners have been appointed. All external examiners are required to complete an annual report to the University using a standardised report form. These reports are considered in detail at school level with oversight exercised by FLTQCs and the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC).

2.104 The design of the University's external examining system meets this Expectation. The review team considered the effectiveness of the system's implementation by analysing policy documentation relating to external examining, and a sample of external examiner reports and documentation of the consideration of these within the University's deliberative structures. It also discussed aspects of external examining in meetings with staff, and asked students about their access to external examiner reports.

2.105 There is clear evidence of the nomination and appointment process working effectively, and this is also the case in relation to the induction and briefing of external examiners. The sample of external examiner reports scrutinised by the review team demonstrate that these external examiners had been given the opportunity to comment on draft examination papers as stipulated in the University's Code of Practice prior to assessments taking place, and that they are given access to an appropriate sample of assessed work in order to allow them to meet their responsibilities.

2.106 External examiners are members of Module, Stage and Awards Boards of Examiners; they have the right to attend all three and must attend the Award Board when final awards are being made. There is no requirement for external examiners to attend Module Boards. The review team heard that where an external examiner does not attend the Module Board the University seeks their views on a sample of work prior to the Module Board. This is not clear from the Code of Practice, which states that 'marking standards are reviewed by the external examiner (either before or after confirmation by a Module Assessment Board)'. The reporting templates for Awards Boards require external examiners to endorse the academic decisions of Boards, and examples of exam board documentation seen by the review team include this endorsement.

2.107 The University requires external examiners to submit an annual report, using a standard template that is well aligned with the national guidelines. The sample reports show full engagement with this process by the external examiners. All reports are considered by the relevant school, which is responsible for formulating a formal response to the report. The report and draft response are scrutinised by the relevant FLTQC, following which the response is submitted to the external examiner. Faculty summaries are also prepared by the Associate Dean and a compliance report is submitted to the LTC. This process ensures that

detailed issues are addressed effectively by the relevant school, and also allows any specific recommendations on University regulations or policy to be identified and addressed.

2.108 Associate Deans provide a summary of external examiner reports, including an oversight of the positive comments, to the LTC in the academic year after submission (that is, two years after the year to which the reports refer). They also report to the LTC on compliance with the response to reports process at this time. Senior staff the review team met consider this not to be problematic. They confirmed that issues raised by external examiners are rare, responses to reports are timely and actions are taken locally with reports and responses considered at FLTQC. However, there is no clear evidence of quality assurance feeding into quality enhancement through the thematic review of external examiner reports.

2.109 The University decided that with effect from 2013-14 it would share its external examiner reports with all students through its website, and has put in place a communication plan to support implementation of this. Currently, not all reports have been published due to the need to seek permission from existing external examiners to do so, but in the future this publication will be a condition of appointment for all new externals. Student representatives on FLTQCs have access to external examiner reports, and the revised University Code of Practice on Student Representation states that external examiner reports will, from 2015-16, be shared with Staff Student Liaison Committees.

2.110 The review team considers that the University has robust processes for the use of external examiners, and that the design and implementation of the University's external examiner system are rigorous and effective. The review team concludes that the Expectation is therefore met and the associated 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**

2.111 The University's approach to monitoring and review is set out in policies, procedures and guidance relating to modules, annual course monitoring and five-yearly course reviews.

2.112 The University routinely reviews the quality of teaching and student learning opportunities on all of its programmes through University-wide quality review mechanisms. All courses are subject to annual monitoring and five-yearly review. There is a clearly articulated procedure, operational guidance for annual and five-yearly review.

2.113 Quality review covers module monitoring, student evaluation, module update, annual course update and five-yearly course review. Externality for annual course review is captured through external examiner and PSRB reports.

2.114 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Delivery Group focuses exclusively on quality assurance and enhancement administrative processes, providing administrative support for the management of the University's annual module and course review procedures. The Group is led by the Learning and Teaching Service Quality Manager, and the membership includes the four Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (FLTQC) secretaries and administrative managers from all three Hubs.

2.115 Processes for module review and annual course monitoring are risk-based, particularly with regard to module review. Course monitoring is an annual event focusing on course coherence, including course content, currency, learning teaching and assessment methods, and learning outcomes. Course monitoring is one of the trigger points determining which modules are to be reviewed.

2.116 Annual Review of Assessment and Moderation feeds into the annual course review and is reported in the school's summary of annual course monitoring activity.

2.117 Each module is reviewed at least once during a five-year cycle, unless a more frequent review is triggered, although most module organisers choose to undertake evaluation annually. Module review reports are received by the School Teaching Director, who submits a report including good practice to the Faculty Associate Dean (LTQ), who reports to the LTC.

2.118 The Head of School or the School Teaching Director leads on annual course monitoring. A course monitoring meeting considers all data as set out in the Module Review and Annual Course Monitoring and Update Procedures. Outputs from the process include a report on, among other things, academic standards, student learning experience and enhancement and an action plan.

2.119 The School Teaching Director reviews all reports, summarising good practice and action plans, and approves amendments to programme specifications. These are then submitted to the Head of School and Faculty Associate Dean (LTQ), who confirms modules to be reviewed. The Faculty Associate Dean (LTQ) confirms to the LTC that the process has been undertaken, and highlights good practice and University-wide issues. The Faculty

Associate Dean (LTQ) also coordinates dissemination of good practice within and across faculties, and the School Teaching Director disseminates within schools.

2.120 The University relies on FLTQCs to monitor the processes of quality assurance taking place in schools, for instance programme and module review forms, and external examiners' reports. These FLTQCs generally have one student from the faculty in attendance, in addition to a Students' Union sabbatical officer, but this is not always the case.

2.121 The Taught Programmes Policy Group oversees five-yearly course review processes, publishing lists of courses to be reviewed annually, which are also received by the LTC. Copies of processes and forms for course review and supporting data is provided on a quality review website.

2.122 Course review is conducted every five years. The panel is chaired by a member of the relevant FLTQC, and includes an external member and student members. A report of the review and action plan is produced and provided to the FLTQC, and is then forwarded to the LTC.

2.123 These systems and processes enable the Expectation to be met.

2.124 To test the effectiveness of systems and processes, the review team considered documentation relating to procedures and policies for programme monitoring and review, and met staff and students to discuss their understanding and experience of monitoring and review.

2.125 A new online process for annual monitoring has been introduced, which will improve the process for staff, making it more transparent and in particular providing much richer and more accessible data to support the process. The University expects the new process to be clearer in terms of responsibilities, and timelines will be more effectively met in a more efficient process. There will be further refinements to the process implemented by the University in this academic year.

2.126 Completion of annual module and course review is tracked and reported by Associate Deans through FLTQCs and monitored by the LTC. When reports are not completed this is followed up with schools, but there was no evidence that all reports are received or how completion is ensured. Senior staff the review team met stated that they are making rapid progress on the level of compliance and there is still variability, but that the process has been enhanced with more accessible and improved data. Review reports express some concern about the full participation of relevant staff due to the timing of the review process. Some course reports do not identify modules to be reviewed, include no good practice to be disseminated and do not raise any University-wide issues. However, the review team notes that monitoring is in place and improvements in the process should mitigate some of the issues identified in completing reports.

2.127 A risk-based approach is taken in annual monitoring. Courses are monitored annually and module reviews are undertaken at least once every five years, but a review can be triggered by any of seven identified factors, including concerns raised by students and changes to modules. Student evaluation is collated annually through the 'NSS Plus' survey, which includes questions about student experience on their modules. The module organiser agrees with the team leader the timing and approach to providing feedback to the students from the module review process. However, there is no agreed and systematic approach to providing feedback, and students reported variable experience.

2.128 An annual course monitoring meeting is convened by the Head of School or the School Teaching Director. Programme specifications are amended in line with proposals

identified within annual monitoring reports. Minor changes are reported through the school LTC and major changes go to the Faculty Associate Dean. Completeness and accuracy of programme specifications is agreed at a school level by the Director of Teaching. Action plans derived from the review processes show identification of issues and allow dissemination of good practice with sound oversight via FLTQCs and the LTC.

2.129 The review team found that student engagement and student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement processes is variable but improving. The timing of the annual review process falls such that it can be difficult to engage students. However, some students have seen annual reports at the Staff Student Liaison Committee, and there is evidence of student feedback on modules in annual monitoring forms and reference to the extensive student engagement with annual module monitoring and course review in a report to the LTC. Annual course reports are received by FLTQCs, and the Associate Dean provides a summary report for the LTC. The summary review reports are received by the LTC, but 'to note' and are not discussed. Members of the LTC are expected to read all the reports, but the lack of discussion denies student representatives the opportunity to engage in a discussion of review reports at an institutional level.

2.130 The variability in student engagement is also apparent in five-yearly course review. Students report that this can at times be related to availability of students to sit on panels where limited notice is provided. However, there is evidence from recent course reviews that students are now engaged. Course review reports do not clearly identify the members of the panel, and therefore external and student engagement is not readily identified. At one event there is evidence of a meeting with students and the consideration of student feedback, but this is not consistent in other reports. Clearer identification of student engagement and consideration of student feedback in review reports would be helpful.

2.131 Overall, the review team found that the University operates effective, regular and systematic processes for the monitoring and review of programmes. Compliance and variability of practice including student engagement is improving and the University is aware of the issues and taking action to address them. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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**

2.132 The University complaints and appeals process was revised in 2013, and now consists of an informal process followed by two formal stages. The formal stage 1 process is considered by a Faculty Appeals and Complaints Panel, or a Postgraduate Research Appeals and Complaints Panel, and the stage 2 process is considered by a Director of University Services. At the end of stage 1 the outcome of the complaint or appeal is notified to the student(s) in writing. Students may then escalate the complaint or appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator without the requirement of a stage 2 process, if they wish.

2.133 The complaints and appeals process is available on the University's academic calendar webpage for both staff and students to access. Further guidance is available on the Learning and Teaching Service webpage, and students are able to access the appropriate forms from this site. The University has also developed an academic appeals flowchart to aid the understanding of each stage of the process, as well as an additional guide for staff and students.

2.134 To further aid students in the process, the Students' Union offers independent advice and support to students, and the University signposts this service to students at an early stage. Guidance on where to find the complaints and appeals process is available in the University Student Handbook, but is not available or referenced in school or programme-level handbooks. Students the review team met were not aware of where to find the details of the process but stated that they would contact the Students' Union, Course Directors or the Hub for more information.

2.135 The partner colleges of the University have a two-stage process, with the complaint first dealt with internally at the college and then moved to the University, if not satisfactorily resolved, as a formal stage 2 process.

2.136 The University considers an annual report at the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) that evaluates the complaints, appeals and Office of the Independent Adjudicator referrals in the last academic year, and discusses the impact of their procedures on students.

2.137 The University's considered approach to the complaints and appeals process, and the monitoring of internal and external outcomes, enable the Expectation to be met.

2.138 The review team considered a variety of evidence, including the current and previous complaints process and associated forms, and the annual reports to the LTC, and met staff and students to explore how effective processes are in practice.

2.139 The regulations pertaining to complaints and appeals have recently been revised through a mapping exercise to the Quality Code, Chapter B9. This review included reflecting on the Office of the Independent Adjudicator good practice guidance and was reported to the LTC. The University has recently changed its complaints and appeals process to ensure equitable treatment of all students. Staff on the new Faculty Appeals and Complaints Panels receive training for the role. The annual reporting of complaints, appeals and Office of the Independent Adjudicator referrals ensures that, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of

their complaints and appeals process, the University is modifying its practices to ensure similar complaints do not arise in the future. The report is discussed fully at the Taught Programmes Policy Group, and the complaints and appeals procedure is scheduled for a formal review in 2016.

2.140 The University promotes the use of the Students' Union advice service to students, and the use of this service has increased by 25 per cent over the last four years. In 2013-14, 47 per cent of the total number of appeals were supported by the Students' Union. Students whom the review team met were clear on the services the Students' Union offer in this area and were confident in the support available to them in making an academic appeal or complaint. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

**Findings**

2.141 The University has a strategic approach towards the delivery of learning opportunities with others. This accords with its 2012-16 Corporate Plan and is reflected in its Partnerships Strategy. It intends to expand its collaborative partnerships with further education colleges to enhance its regional impact, develop articulation arrangements with key strategic partners internationally, and provide research collaborations that will provide a high quality training environment for research students.

2.142 Overall responsibility for partnership provision rests with the LTC, including oversight of placement learning provision and work-based learning within the framework provided by the Placement Learning and Work-Based Learning Code of Practice. With effect from November 2013 the governance arrangements for the delivery of postgraduate research students' opportunities with others were delegated from the LTC to the PGR Executive. Both the LTC and the PGR Executive have appropriate membership to provide oversight of partnership provision. The University's approach to the management of its collaborative activities was reviewed in 2014. The University provides comprehensive and detailed guidance on the establishment, approval, validation and ongoing management of its collaborative provision in its Partnerships Handbook, International Partnerships Handbook, and Placement Learning and Work-Based Learning Code of Practice. Taxonomies relating to different types of arrangements are clear and appropriate.

2.143 The University's policies and regulations relating to the management of higher education provision with others enables Expectation B10 to be met.

2.144 The review team was able to assess the operation and effectiveness of the University's procedures, policies and their operational implementation through meetings with staff and analysis of a range of relevant documentation relating to approval, review and management, committee minutes and papers, as well as legal and other documentation.

2.145 The University's strategic approach to the delivery of learning opportunities with others has resulted in the cessation of some partnerships and the development of new ones. The University intends to develop '2+2' articulation agreements. Although currently there are no such arrangements, there are approved template agreements. However, the review team noted that the Partnerships Handbook is not explicit on the way in which these will be managed and monitored, which the University may wish to address before pursuing this aim. There is a particular and strong focus on the development of postgraduate research student learning opportunities with others. The University's largest area of collaborative activity is at University Campus Suffolk, the awards of which are co-validated with the University of Essex. Oversight is managed through the University Campus Suffolk Joint Academic Committee, and both institutions are supporting University Campus Suffolk in its plan to obtain taught degree awarding powers.

2.146 The University has different forms of governance and management arrangements for discreet areas of collaborative activity, covering collaborative taught partnerships, postgraduate student research, study abroad and placement learning. A central Partnerships Office manages taught provision delivered in collaboration. The Academic Director of

Partnerships provides academic leadership and is a member of the LTC. Arrangements for the approval and delivery of postgraduate research student learning opportunities with others are governed through the PGR Executive, which reports to the LTC and to which report five Graduate School Executives, one for each faculty and one for the Norwich Biosciences Institutes. The Postgraduate Research Service works with the Partnerships Office on the implementation and management of such arrangements. Study abroad arrangements are supported through the Study Abroad Office, supported by a Study Abroad Dialogue Group, which reports to the LTC and the International Executive; new partnerships are approved by Heads of Schools and the Partnerships Review Group. Other forms of placement and work-based learning are approved by schools in accordance with procedures approved by the LTC. The University maintains records by type and category of arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with others that are subject to a formal agreement. However, the review team notes that the maintenance arrangements for such records are fragmented.

2.147 The University examined its approach to managing higher education provision with others arising from changes to the Quality Code, and reports with action plans and updates have been presented to the LTC. The University takes deliberate steps to enhance its management of collaborative provision internally and through work with its partner organisations.

2.148 Approval of taught collaborative provision is in accordance with the principles and procedures set out in the University's guidance. There is a well-defined distinction between approval of the partner organisation and the academic approval of the academic course. The former requires appropriate due diligence, including a review by the Academic Director of Partnerships, and an institutional approval event, usually at the prospective institution, involving a member external to the University. The formal decision to establish a new collaborative partnership is taken by the Senate on the recommendation of the LTC. Partnership agreements are in place that use appropriate templates. The approach to the approval of international partnerships adopts a similar but more overtly risk-based approach, with some variations in the process depending on whether the proposed arrangement is initiated by the University or the proposed partner. The validation of new courses to be delivered in collaboration is designed to ensure that the standards and quality of courses are commensurate with that of the University. The LTC grants, in principle, approval and (if granted) a validation panel, which includes a subject expert external to the University, considers relevant documentation, followed by a validation event. Approval may be granted with conditions, which are required to be signed off by the chair of the panel or referred back to the LTC. Appropriate partnership agreements are in place for such activity in accordance with University approved templates. Documentation seen by the review team confirm the robust approach of the University to ensuring that its standards and quality are met. Courses are revalidated every five years. The University does not permit serial franchising of its courses.

2.149 The review team notes that clarity for the approval of taught collaborative provision was less evident in research degree partnership provision delivered through cotutelle arrangements. The University adopts a proportionate approach to the approval and management of such arrangements and cotutelle agreements, which lead to dual awards, are approved on an individual basis by the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes. The review team heard from relevant staff that there is no articulated process for the approval of partners in cotutelle arrangements leading to such awards, even though there are informal criteria to assess partner suitability. Although the PGR Executive reports to the LTC, the mechanism through which LTC has oversight of such dual awards is opaque. The review team also noted that in three instances students had been registered on dual awards without cotutelle agreements having been signed. The review team recognises that this affects a very small proportion of its collaborative arrangements and is related to only

one area of activity. The review team **recommends** that the University define, articulate and implement arrangements for the approval of cotutelle partners for dual awards, including taking steps to ensure that a cotutelle agreement has been signed before the relevant activity commences.

2.150 Arrangements for ongoing management of collaborations are clearly set out in the University's Partnerships Handbook and include: the establishment of Joint Boards of Study; annual course self-assessment reviews and annual monitoring reports; five-yearly institutional review; external examiner oversight; and the provision of an institutional academic link, who provides an annual report. The University recognises the important role that students play in monitoring and enhancing the delivery and development of its courses and requires the establishment of Staff Student Liaison Committees and student feedback on modules. Joint Boards of Study have oversight of issues arising from student feedback. The LTC receives reports at every meeting from, among others, the PGR Executive and the Partnerships Office. Taken as a whole, the review team is of the opinion that these measures amount to an effective approach to the management of risk and enhancement of quality.

2.151 The University's requirements relating to assessment, external examining, the recognition of prior learning, admissions, regulations and marketing are clearly specified. Its publicity protocol is rigorously enforced and monitored, and information provided to students by partner organisations is reviewed annually for accuracy and completeness. Certificates for students studying on collaborative awards are produced by the University. These conform to relevant requirements.

2.152 In accordance with its strategic approach, the University has terminated some partnership arrangements, some being managed to full closure. The University's policies and their implementation for the withdrawal of collaborative provision are effective, with the University retaining responsibility for enabling students to complete their studies.

2.153 The University has effective policies and procedures for placements and study abroad, which are set out in a Study Abroad Guide and in the relevant Code of Practice. Study abroad arrangements are handled through the Study Abroad Office. The University has identified areas in need of enhancement and monitors progress, which is reported to the LTC. Approval of study abroad institutions follows a clear process to assess suitability, and regular monitoring takes place through student and school feedback, international ranking reviews and cyclical visits. Work placement activity has been identified by the University as an area in need of greater institutional-level strategic management and oversight. Current management arrangements vary across the University, from academic leads at the course level, to dedicated placement teams within the Learning and Teaching Service for professional courses. While the quality assurance of placements complies with the Code of Practice, this varies from specific arrangements at the level of the school or faculty, to more formal assurance on courses with PSRB requirements. The Code of Practice sets out an appropriate framework with clear responsibilities and expectations. Staff met by the review team confirmed awareness of and adherence to the University's Codes of Practice. Staff were also aware of, and students commented favourably on, the levels of support in preparing students for such activities, their monitoring and evaluation. External examiners are required to comment on the appropriateness of placements in programmes that require them. The University has recently approved a University-wide system for the review of placements (including revised module review, annual course monitoring and five-yearly Course Review processes) and a summary report will be made annually to the LTC.

2.154 The review team concludes that Expectation B10 is met. The level of associated risk is low as the University has effective processes, policies and management to implement

and secure effectively the standards and quality of provision delivered with others. The recommendation on approval processes of cotutelle partners for dual awards relates to a very small part of the University's overall arrangements for managing higher education provision with others and in large part requires the University to formalise arrangements which are already robust, and will not require or result in major structural, operational or procedural change.

**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**

2.155 Responsibility for the academic quality and standards of research degree provision sits with the Senate. Oversight has been delegated to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), which in turn has delegated powers to the PGR Executive. The PGR Executive is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), who is supported in this by an Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes. There are five Faculty Graduate Schools, one for each faculty and a further one for the Norwich Biosciences Institutes. The structures relating to the Norwich Biosciences Institutes mirror those for faculties, and the University regularly reviews its agreement with the Institutes. Each Faculty Graduate School has its own Executive, a committee that supports the Faculty Associate Dean on Graduate School issues.

2.156 The University has recently approved a Research Degrees Education Strategy, which sets out the key attributes of those awarded the University doctoral degrees and has 15 strategic aims and 20 key performance indicators. There is a linked, comprehensive Quality Enhancement Plan. There is also a Code of Practice for Research Degrees, the implementation of which is supported by a wide range of research degree policy documents, and a comprehensive set of University regulations covering research degree provision.

2.157 These frameworks, strategies and policies enable the Expectation to be met.

2.158 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to the operation of this framework. This included policies and procedures, minutes of relevant committees, handbooks, and samples of training materials provided to staff and students. A meeting was held with a group of current research students, and research degree provision was discussed in meetings with staff.

2.159 The effectiveness of the structures for oversight of research degree provision was evident from the minutes of the PGR Executive and the Graduate School Executives. An appropriate range of business is conducted in an effective way, and the PGR Executive reports to the LTC on the exercise of its responsibilities

2.160 There is a strong institutional research environment (evident in the University's REF performance and its success in gaining research council funding for doctoral training centres/partnerships). There is a range of activities taking place at University, faculty and school level to involve and engage students in the wider research environment, and taken together these provide an appropriate and effective research environment for research students. The University has identified a strategic need to enhance the provision of space for research students, and clear steps are being taken to develop a Postgraduate Research Space Strategy to address this. Current research students were positive about the learning resources made available to them.

2.161 The Code of Practice sets out an appropriate framework for admission to research degrees, and a range of appropriate information is provided for applicants. There are clear

guidelines on the information that should be sent to successful applicants when they are being offered a place, and induction for new students takes place at faculty and school level. Research students the review team met confirmed this induction is appropriate and effective.

2.162 Supervisory teams including at least two research-active staff, are appointed by the relevant Head of School/Institute for all research students, with one member of the team being the primary supervisor. Staff new to doctoral supervision may not serve as primary supervisor until they have first gained experience as a second supervisor or member of a supervisory team. University policy is that supervisors should not normally be the primary supervisor for more than six students at one time. This is monitored at school level, and the review team heard of instances where Heads of School had taken action to manage workloads of staff with higher numbers of research students. Additionally, the PGR Executive has identified a need to ensure an appropriate level of consistency in the recognition of research degree supervision within the staff workload model, and is actively progressing this issue.

2.163 The frequency of supervisory meetings is agreed between a student and their supervisory team subject to a University minimum requirement that eight supervisory meetings take place a year, and this is monitored through the annual review process. The review team's meeting with research students confirmed that joint or team supervision was in place for all research students, and that regular meetings take place. Where difficulties arise in the supervisory process research students are able to raise these with a range of people outside the supervisory team, and the research students the review team met were aware of who to approach in such circumstances.

2.164 All research students undergo an annual progress review. This forms a discussion between the research student and their supervisory team, following which the research student completes a self-evaluation of progress using the University's online form. The research students the review team met confirmed that this process operates as set out in the Code of Practice. Having considered the student's submission the supervisory team then submits their report, following which the student's submission and supervisory team's reports are reviewed by the school/institute Director of Postgraduate Research. A school/institute summary report is then considered by the relevant Graduate School Executive, which scrutinises the summaries; asks the school/institute to address any issues it identifies; and reports on the process to the PGR Executive.

2.165 Currently, many research students register initially for an MPhil and can subsequently seek to transfer to doctoral study through a written submission to, and interview by, a transfer panel that must include at least one member of academic staff from outside the student's supervisory team. Support for students to prepare for the transfer panel is in place, and students the review team met generally found this to be useful. From 2015-16 the University will introduce a new probationary status for all new research degree students. This will be accompanied by the inclusion in the first year annual review of an internal assessor who is not a member of the supervisory team.

2.166 Research training takes place at faculty level, within a set framework that takes account of key reference points, such as those of RCUK. Examples of faculty programmes demonstrate a range of appropriate opportunities, and student engagement with these opportunities is monitored through the annual progress review. Research students undertake an initial training needs assessment that happens shortly after they commence their studies, and this assessment is reviewed and updated through the course of each student's research degree programme. The research students the review team met felt that the usefulness of the training varied, particularly where provision was generic in nature. The University has recognised the need for further development in this area, establishing a working group in

spring 2015 to put in place an updated, framework for research training provision and to develop a new training needs analysis.

2.167 Student feedback on their experience is considered in a number of ways. For example, Graduate School Executives identify and consider generic issues arising from the annual progress review process, and research students are represented at the appropriate points in the University committee structure. The University also participates in the Higher Education Academy's Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, with these results being considered by the PGR Executive and action plans being put in place at faculty level in response to the results.

2.168 The University's Instructions to Examiners of research degrees take account of the FHEQ, and there is a clear framework for the assessment of research degrees, including a separate Code of Practice for the External Examiners' System for Research Awards. This includes clear information for examiners, and support for students in preparing for the examination process. Examiners submit independent reports prior to a student's viva, followed by a subsequent joint report. All examiner reports are scrutinised by the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes to identify generic issues emerging from the reports that require consideration at school, faculty or institutional level.

2.169 The University operates a single appeals and complaints regulation that applies to all students, including research students. These are clear and appropriate. They are made available to the research students through the University's website, and are clearly referenced in the Code of Practice. An annual report is submitted to the LTC on appeals and complaints, and this includes consideration of those for research degrees as well as taught programmes.

2.170 The design of the University's framework for the management of research degrees is thorough and appropriate, and there is clear evidence that this being implemented effectively. The review team therefore concludes that Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.172 The University has effective mechanisms, systems and processes for ensuring the quality of student learning opportunities. All Expectations in this area are met and all have a low associated risk, apart from Expectation B1.

2.173 Expectation B1 is deemed to have a moderate risk as there is a lack of effective oversight and monitoring of cumulative changes and deviations to programmes. Oversight of the cumulative changes of programmes is managed through the historical record of programme specifications, is dependent on the scrutiny of the School Teaching Director, and would be assessed in five-yearly course review. In addition, the regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes make provision for students to study modules outside of their programme through a concession route, and the review team found this not to be an effectively managed process. The lack of oversight of changes to programmes and the deviation from core or mandatory modules on some programmes risks ongoing changes to programmes fundamentally changing the nature of a programme. The review team makes a recommendation to address this issue. The risk to Expectation B1 is not, however, serious as quality assurance procedures concerned with programme design, development and approval are broadly adequate but have some shortcomings that need to be addressed.

2.174 A further two recommendations relate to some inconsistencies in assessment board regulations and their implementation (Expectation B6), and isolated issues with cotutelle arrangements for a small number of postgraduate research students on dual awards, including the formalisation of processes to approve partners involved in such dual awards (Expectation B10). These present a low risk to the Expectations concerned, as in all other aspects the University has sound and effective systems and processes to ensure the quality of learning opportunities.

2.175 The review team identified two features of good practice in Expectation B4 concerning the significant contribution of Academic Advisers and the Dean of Student's Office to student development and achievement, and the strategic approach to the enhancement of student employability.

2.176 The steps being taken by the University to implement the new Code of Practice on Student Representation are affirmed by the review team.

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

### **3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities**

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

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

##### **Findings**

3.1 The public-facing University website contains a variety of information for prospective students and the general public to learn about the courses it offers and the management of the University. Key information such as governance, policies and procedures and a full course directory is available, as well as information about funding and applying, and targeted information for international and EU students. The website and prospectus are managed by the Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing Team (ARM Team), and course-level content is created in association with the faculty Associate Deans for Admissions. The University also provides information to prospective students through open days, school visits and through its dedicated enquiries team.

3.2 The ARM Team has developed a student journey map to ensure communications are sent to applicants in a timely fashion. There is a 'New Students' website, which provides information about the city before arrival and details on induction activities and accommodation. Students receive a copy of the University handbook at induction as well as a school handbook that contains information about their course, support services, and the regulations of the University.

3.3 Students receive a module outline for each module they are enrolled on, and this is usually available on the University virtual learning environment (VLE). Guidance is provided to module leaders on the content of module outlines, which should include module learning outcomes, formative and summative assessment, and teaching methods. The University encourages the use of the VLE through the provision of a learning technology team that supports the development of innovative uses of the platform.

3.4 The University provides graduates with an academic transcript and a diploma supplement, which is managed through the Student Records Office. This team also produces other verification letters where necessary, and information on how students can apply for additional certificates is available on the student records webpage.

3.5 Information relating to undergraduate policies and procedures, as well as external examiners reports, programme specifications and School handbooks are available to students and staff through the Learning and Teaching Service (LTS) webpage. Information for research degree students is provided through the Postgraduate Research Service webpages, and the Faculty Graduate School and doctoral training partnership websites.

3.6 The publication of policies, procedures and governance information, the information for applicants and current students, and the accessibility of quality assurance documentation and processes enable this Expectation to be met.

3.7 The effectiveness of these processes was tested through scrutiny of the University website, the virtual learning environment, and various documents, including handbooks provided to current students. The review team also met current students, and teaching and professional staff, to evaluate effectiveness in this area.

3.8 The University's website provides comprehensive information to prospective students on the courses offered at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Clear fee information is provided, as well as details on how to apply and what scholarships are available. Information about the governance of the University and the Student Charter are easily accessible, and policies and procedures are readily available to the public on the website.

3.9 While the website for new students contains useful information, students whom the review team met had not used the site before arrival, and some were confused by pre-arrival information they received. Most students were, however, satisfied with the course level induction they received.

3.10 All students receive a University, school and module handbook. Through an evaluation of these handbooks the review team notes that an advisory recommendation from the last QAA review in 2009, to specify the limits of acceptable variation in practice at school level regarding the content of handbooks, has not been fully addressed. While different disciplines may want to develop handbooks in different ways such as by year, by programme, or by school, this can lead to the provision of inconsistent information. In addition, students are not always clear on where to find key information about their course within the various handbooks. The LTS has provided information on suggested content of school handbooks, and Course Directors are responsible for ensuring their accuracy, however, there is no central oversight of this process to ensure the correct information is presented. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the University put in place mechanisms to ensure effective oversight to manage the variability in practice in the provision of programme information to current students.

3.11 Students the review team met were very complimentary about the content of module outlines and thought they provided them with appropriate information to be successful. However, they had no awareness of how their modules fit together to contribute to the overall learning outcomes of their course. Some students commented that they may have had a talk at the beginning of their course on the programme learning outcomes. There are, however, no mechanisms to ensure students are reflecting on these throughout their student journey, and some students the review team met were not clear what they were expected to achieve by the end of their course. Although many programme specifications are available on the LTS website, not all are present or complete and they are only signposted to students through the University handbook. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the University communicate effectively to students' information about programme learning outcomes at the start of, and throughout, their studies.

3.12 Academic administrative support is provided to students through three Learning and Teaching Hubs. Students regularly use the Hubs to update their student records, submit non-electronic feedback and to collect marked work. The review team heard a mixed picture from students on the effectiveness of the Hubs, and some cited issues with the accuracy and timelines of information given, especially in relation to module choice. Satisfaction with the Hubs is monitored through National Student Survey scores and internal surveys, however, some students remain concerned with the service provided to them.

3.13 Overall, the University provides fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy information to the public, to prospective and current students, and to staff. There are some shortcomings in the management of course level information for current students, which the two recommendations address, but these are confined to a small part of the overall provision of information. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

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

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

3.15 The Expectation in the area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.16 The University has effective mechanisms to manage the quality of information it provides to intended audiences. Information provided to prospective students, staff and other stakeholders is fit for purpose, trustworthy and accessible. This is also largely the case for current students, although the review team identified two minor issues with regard to the provision of information on programme learning outcomes and the variability in practice in the provision of programme information. The review team makes two recommendations to address these issues.

3.17 The review team has not identified any good practice and makes no affirmations on the quality of information about learning opportunities.

3.18 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the University **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 Enhancement is driven, supported and overseen at a strategic level within the University through the executive at each level of management within the organisation. This oversight is supported by the creation of Academic Director roles ensuring delivery on specific agendas, for example the Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement and the Director of Employability. Executive staff are members of relevant committees in the deliberative committee structure, ensuring cross-representation. Engagement, collective oversight and monitoring of enhancement is delivered through staff and student representation on committees.

4.2 The University's approach to enhancement derives from the systematic use of standard quality assurance processes to promote continuous improvement and the strategic priorities it has identified. The latter derive from its Corporate Plan, Learning and Teaching Strategy, and Research Degrees Education Strategy, with a clear enhancement focus. Both strategies have detailed implementation plans and key performance indicators to measure the impact of enhancements, and both articulate the graduate and postgraduate attributes that students are expected to have developed during their studies at the University.

4.3 The University considers that it has encouraged enhancement activity through funded Teaching Fellowships and Excellence in Teaching Award schemes, and that key to enhancement of teaching and learning, and the student experience, is the training and development of the academic and learning support staff. In addition to an annual Learning and Teaching Day, which discusses the strategic enhancement of learning and teaching, the University has provided new and accredited opportunities for academic staff through the Centre for Staff and Educational Development.

4.4 The New Academic Model (NAM) was developed and implemented to drive consistency and present to students with a harmonised offer. It provides students with an enhanced framework for their learning, with more emphasis on effective engagement, and improved student experience of teaching, assessment and feedback.

4.5 Enhanced information gathering has been implemented to identify areas for enhancement more efficiently and effectively, and enhancements are informed by student feedback through the Student Experience Survey and the National Student Survey.

4.6 The Taught Programmes Policy Group brings together academic staff and taught students, and is tasked with scrutinising new policy initiatives and practice relating to teaching and learning, and is primarily focused on strategic enhancement.

4.7 The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) conducts reviews on a five to seven year basis of regulations, and academic and general regulations, associated with procedures.

4.8 The University's approach to enhancement enables the Expectation to be met.

4.9 The review team analysed this approach through considering, for example, review and monitoring reports, policies, role descriptions, student surveys and committee minutes, and met staff and students to consider its effectiveness.

4.10 The review team identified a series of key centrally driven activities that demonstrate a coordinated and deliberate effort to enhance the student experience. The main driver for the approach taken to enhancement is to increase consistency across schools and faculties, and better integrate the range of services for students.

4.11 New strategic appointments have been made to provide leadership in priority areas. In September 2014 a new Academic Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement was tasked with driving developments and achievements in learning and teaching to enhance the student and staff experience. Each school has an Employability Director with responsibility for developing student employability. Evidence of the impact and more detail of these roles is set out under Expectation B3 and in section 5.

4.12 The NAM is described as the cornerstone of the implementation of the new Learning and Teaching Strategy, focusing, for example, on high levels of course-level coordination and planning, enhanced assessment and feedback support, and alignment to programme outcomes. Emerging enhanced practice and increasingly consistent approaches to supporting the assessment processes demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach. An evaluative framework is in place for assessing the NAM over the first three years of application, and a first report was received by the LTC in May 2015. However, the first report suggests that there may be timing issues with the evaluation and there was a very limited response time.

4.13 Working groups of staff and students have addressed policies and regulations with a view to implementing tangible improvements to the student experience. Examples include student transitions, policies on double marking and moderation, the policy on academic appeals and complaints, the policy on plagiarism and a review of student representation.

4.14 An enhancement-led approach is evident in the development of library access and resources. A postgraduate area has been established in response to student feedback and is well-used and valued by the students. Staff whom the review team met were looking forward to the introduction of a new technology centre for enhanced learning in the library which would support digital literacy. A major review of the collection policy has been undertaken with staff and students to identify the sort of library the University should have in place for the future.

4.15 Staff experience enhancement through events such as the University Learning and Teaching Day, the Teaching Directors' conference, and through informal interaction with colleagues. Dissemination of practice is also supported through the attendance of other faculty members attending School Board meetings to share initiatives and good practice.

4.16 Students believe that enhancement occurs more at the level of individual teachers as opposed to at an institutional level, and are extremely positive and enthusiastic about, and inspired by, the quality of the teaching and support from some of their teaching staff. The quality of teaching and student support is further illustrated in the University performance in the National Student Survey and other league tables.

4.17 There is evidence of systematic enhancement embedded across the University for online submission and feedback. This was a cross-institution project engaging academic and support staff and students, with a number of pilot phases to assess and evaluate success in an environment that supports innovation.

4.18 In 2014-15 the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), on behalf of the LTC, created an advising policy to ensure that students were provided with consistent and accessible individual support from their Academic Adviser. The students the review team met recognised and appreciated the role played by their Adviser and identified them as a key contact when needing support and advice. The review team considers that the role played by Advisers contributes to the enhancement of the student experience, supporting progression and achievement, and this adds to the good practice identified under Expectation B4 (see paragraph 2.53). All Academic Advisers are required to undertake development every three years and annual evaluation of the scheme is undertaken.

4.19 The review team considers that the University takes deliberate steps to enhance and improve the quality of student learning opportunities through a combination of institutional-led initiatives and locally devised activities, engaging staff and students, that are supported, evaluated and appropriately disseminated. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.21 The Expectation in the area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.22 The University has effective mechanisms to enhance learning opportunities for students and takes deliberate steps at institution level to achieve this. Enhancement is driven, supported and overseen at a strategic level through the Executive at each level of management, and engagement, collective oversight and monitoring of enhancement is delivered through staff and student representation on committees. The University's approach to enhancement derives from its systematic use of standard quality assurance processes to promote continuous improvement and the strategic priorities it has identified. The New Academic Model was developed and implemented to drive consistency and present to students with a harmonised offer. It provides students with an enhanced framework for their learning; with more emphasis on effective engagement, and improved student experience of teaching, assessment and feedback.

4.23 The review team makes no recommendations or affirmations to the University in this area and has not identified any good practice specific to enhancement. However, the two features of good practice identified in Expectation B4 contribute to the enhancement activities of the University.

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

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 The University identified student employability as a strategic priority in 2012, which is reflected in key objectives set in its Corporate Plan 2012-16. Following benchmarking against institutions with sector-leading attributes on employability, the University's approach has resulted in significant investment in a range of activities; greater student engagement with the reshaped Careers Service; and changes in the approach to the development of student employability. Its new plan for the period 2016-20, coupled with the development of a longer term strategic vision, will enhance the strategic approach to student employability and will be underpinned by Faculty Employability Plans. To facilitate its strategic approach the University has appointed an Academic Director of Employability to provide leadership; formed an Employability Executive, which is mirrored by similar executives in each faculty; and appointed Associate Deans for Employability in each faculty. School-level Directors of Employability integrate, coordinate and plan employability activity

5.2 The University aims to ensure that during their studies students achieve attributes through the development of transferable skills, experience of working environments and career management abilities, which will equip them for graduate level employment. The restructured Careers Service offers a comprehensive range of services, including the introduction of online support to provide enhanced information and resources for students. The Career Central building has contributed to improved student engagement with the Careers Service. The graduate internship programme has been expanded with the introduction of Springboard campus-based, and summer internships.

5.3 The University has a strong relationship with employers through the Local Enterprise Partnership and community organisations. It also works with the Norfolk Network, the East of England Energy Group, engineering and digital communities, and the Institute of Directors. Strategic relationships with employers are developed through the Research and Enterprise Division. Approaches to student enterprise and the development of entrepreneurial skills have been remodelled. The University has developed its Student Enterprise Strategy and appointed a Student Enterprise Officer to support its development. A broad range of initiatives are available centrally, as well as through faculties and schools. Provision for research students has also been expanded and a comprehensive range of workshops is available through the University Personal and Professional Development Programme. A review of the University's Academic Advising System in 2014-15 has resulted in policy and resource development to enhance approaches to employability. Students have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of extracurricular and volunteering experiences. A new Skills Award was piloted in spring 2015 and is to be implemented across the University in 2015-16 to develop and recognise graduate-level attributes; the Skills Award Steering Group includes representation from employers.

5.4 The University's approach to the development of employability within the curriculum is to ensure that courses are designed to align with the development of graduate attributes (as opposed to imposing compulsory modules), expand skills training and engage employers in the delivery and development of the curriculum. To facilitate this approach, consideration of employability issues is embedded in core processes, such as the development of programmes, new module outlines and the revised Academic Advising System. These enable students to better recognise the development of key employment-relevant attributes. A number of courses have a strong employability focus and the University provided evidence of external organisations supporting the curriculum to enhance the development of student employability attributes.

5.5 It is clear to the review team that the University has provided significant and strategic investment to develop student employability and has effective mechanisms to further enhance the employability of its students at all levels of study.

## 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 30-33 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](http://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](http://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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