



# Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd (University of Northampton International College)

November 2017

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Navitas UK Holdings Ltd (University of Northampton International College). The review took place from 27 to 28 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Alan Jago
- Dr Sylvia Hargreaves.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<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 (Embedded Colleges) the QAA review team:

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

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)<sup>2</sup> and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).<sup>3</sup> 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/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges): [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education).

## Key findings

### Judgements

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

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

### Good practice

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

- The high levels of academic and personal support offered to students, which provides a highly effective preparation for their transition to the University (Expectation B4).
- The student representative system, which facilitates students' active engagement in quality assurance and enhancement (Expectation B5).

### Recommendations

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

By March 2018:

- review all amended Navitas UK Policy and Regulations and ensure that all locally contextualised versions are approved in accordance with the Navitas procedure (Expectation A2.1)
- ensure that final approval of programmes is formally notified to relevant committees in accordance with Navitas procedures (Expectations A3.1 and B1)
- ensure that all college versions of Navitas UK Policy and Regulations are fully documented, in accordance with Navitas policy, and are made accessible to those responsible for academic standards and quality (Expectation C).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps being taken to establish policies and procedures for the appointment of external examiners to all programmes (Expectation B7).

### Financial sustainability, management and governance

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

## About the provider

The University of Northampton International College (UNIC) is an Affiliate College of the University of Northampton and is the newest of a network of UK colleges that is owned and operated by Navitas UK Holdings Ltd as part of its European University Pathways Division.

The partnership between UNIC and the University began following the signing of the contractual partnership agreement in 2015. UNIC welcomed its first students in September 2016 and since then UNIC has recruited students onto a range of academic pathway provision. During the 2016-17 academic year, UNIC received approximately 140 students and had nine full-time equivalent staff members.

UNIC offers undergraduate and postgraduate pathways that lead to a University of Northampton degree. Each pathway is a single undergraduate or postgraduate programme delivered by UNIC and the University, following successful completion of which students are awarded an appropriate degree by the University. Pathway provision at UNIC consists of foundation level 3 Business Studies, Engineering, Law, and Science and Healthcare; first-year level 4 Business Studies and Engineering through Standard, Standard Delivery Plus and Integrated Provision; and level 6/7 pre-master's. UNIC has already begun the process of expanding the academic provision that it offers. MA SEN and MA SEN (Autism) programmes have been included as pre-master's progression routes, with a foundation level 3 Fashion and Footwear course due to begin in January 2018, subject to final approval.

The partnership between UNIC and the University of Northampton is still in its infancy and is continuing to develop. The University is moving to a new campus in September 2018, which will include the relocation of UNIC.

## Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Findings**

1.1 UNIC, embedded in the University of Northampton, is not a degree-awarding body.

1.2 UNIC began delivering courses in September 2016. Current pathway provision consists of foundation level 3 Business Studies, Engineering, Law, and Science and Healthcare; first-year level 4 Business Studies and Engineering through Standard, Standard Delivery Plus and Integrated Provision; and level 6/7 pre-master's.

1.3 UNIC works with the University to ensure academic standards are aligned to the appropriate level of the FHEQ. UNIC does not make awards; the stages it delivers form part of an education continuum leading to a University degree.

1.4 Where appropriate, provision is aligned to Subject Benchmark Statements. UNIC receives notification from the Navitas Quality and Standards Office when Subject Benchmark Statements have been reviewed and published. Delivery of learning outcomes

are subject to scrutiny by annual monitoring and moderation processes.

1.5 The University and UNIC together use credit in the design and delivery of programmes. Programme specifications, definitive module documents and module guides list learning outcomes, credit and assessment requirements.

1.6 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.7 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing approval documentation, including programme and module specifications. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and support staff, and senior staff.

1.8 The documentation that the review team examined demonstrated that UNIC adheres to the Navitas programme approval, monitoring and review procedures, which safeguard academic standards.

1.9 Programme documents confirmed that they had been considered in terms of the Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and level descriptors.

1.10 Programme specifications provide learning outcomes phrased to reflect the level of the programmes and a mapping between learning outcomes and modules.

1.11 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

1.12 UNIC provision forms part of the educational offering of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

1.13 The Quality Manual and related Navitas UK Policies and Procedures (NPRs) describe the processes for programme approval, modifications and review; annual monitoring; moderation; and the operation of the assessment boards. Both the University of Northampton and UNIC have oversight of the standards of UNIC provision through programme approval processes and through membership of governance committees. This approach to quality processes and oversight should ensure that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained. Navitas has responsibility through its Quality and Standards Office for ensuring that policies are regularly reviewed and updated as required by any changes to the Quality Code or operating environment.

1.14 The UNIC Director and the Director of Academic and Student Services are responsible for the management of standards. Academic standards on each pathway are reviewed through the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC), which is chaired by the University and provides a forum for exchange between key staff in UNIC and the University. It meets three times a year and is the primary mechanism for reporting on academic standards to the University.

1.15 The AAC reports to the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB). There are other joint UNIC and University governance committees, including the Operational Advisory Committee and the Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Advisory Committee.

1.16 The UNIC Learning and Teaching Board is the key internal academic committee, with membership including academic and administrative staff, and students. It considers module changes, recommendations from examination boards, student survey results and any proposed actions.

1.17 The quality assurance processes and procedures, set by UNIC, Navitas and the University, are defined and documented in the UNIC Collaborative Operations Manual.

1.18 A number of monitoring processes have been established to enable UNIC, the University and Navitas to be confident in the quality and standards of teaching and assessment delivered at UNIC, including robust scrutiny at approval events and annual programme monitoring.

1.19 The academic framework and the associated policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.20 In considering the Expectation the review team examined the terms of reference of the AAC; academic regulations addressing programme approval and review, assessment and annual monitoring; the Navitas Quality Manual; organisational committee structures, reports and minutes from committees; and annual monitoring reports. The team also held discussions with members of staff.

1.21 The NPRs are closely aligned with relevant sections of the Quality Code, and are regularly reviewed. In principle, they are cascaded to UNIC to inform local College Policies and Regulations. At UNIC, the academic framework and regulations that are applied to students are outlined in NPR QS9 Assessment Regulations. UNIC can also exercise its discretion to amend or 'localise' the NPR documents in the creation of College Policies and Regulations. The Navitas Quality Manual states that the NPRs apply to all colleges in the Navitas network, although it acknowledges that there will be instances where detailed practices may differ in some partnerships. Any variations must be agreed and reviewed by the Navitas Quality and Standards Office, and documented either in a college appendix to the Quality Manual or through the UNIC Collaborative Operations Manual.

1.22 The review team found that UNIC had made some amendments to the NPRs applicable to its programmes. Some had been made during the initial approval process and others had been amended subsequently. Although the changes were relatively minor, the procedure outlined in the Quality Manual had not been followed in the case of the most recent changes. The review team **recommends** that UNIC review all amended Navitas UK Policy and Regulations and ensure that all locally contextualised versions are approved in accordance with the Navitas procedure.

1.23 UNIC has a comprehensive academic framework and related regulations. However, not all procedures are being followed. The review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the associated level of risk is moderate.

**Expectation: Not met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**



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

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

**Findings**

1.24 Programme specifications define the intended learning outcomes of each approved programme of study, and represent the definitive record of the programme. The programme specification contains a series of definitive module documents, which include the detailed module outline. Teaching staff use the programme specification and documents to produce module guides. UNIC does not award qualifications. UNIC's educational offering provides progression routes or pathways to University of Northampton awards. The programme specification is completed to a standard format, which requires that programme and module learning outcomes are specified, and there is acknowledgement of relevant reference points. Programme specifications and documents are reviewed during annual monitoring.

1.25 The programme approval and modification processes require that formal notification and full approval is received by UNIC before any changes can be made to the record of provision held by UNIC and the University.

1.26 All curriculum documentation for approved programmes are stored on the UNIC SharePoint server and the University Tundra document management system.

1.27 The requirements of UNIC, together with the regulations and procedures, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.28 In considering this Expectation, the review team examined the relevant UNIC regulation, policies and supporting documents, including sample programme specifications and reports from annual monitoring. The team also held meetings with staff and students.

1.29 The documents seen by the review team demonstrate full compliance with the regulations. Learning outcomes were appropriately specified at programme and module level. The definitive module document identifies the module title, level and any prerequisites. The form contains detailed information and describes the module's aims, content, resources, reading list and assessment methods.

1.30 Students whom the team met were clear about their programme of study, the modules they were taking and the assessment requirements.

1.31 Annual monitoring reports seen by the review team were comprehensive and indicated where changes were being proposed.

1.32 The documents seen by the team demonstrate a thorough approach to oversight and a commitment to continuous improvement.

1.33 Programme specifications provide a definitive record of UNIC's provision and are approved and modified through appropriate processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A3.1): 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**

1.34 UNIC programme design and approval processes operate within the Navitas policy and procedural framework, and in accordance with the programme approval provisions of the UNIC Collaborative Operations Manual, which align with Navitas requirements. All programme proposals are subject to business case approval by Navitas and the University of Northampton. Once strategic approval has been obtained, UNIC and a University subject specialist nominee design the curriculum, which is set out in draft programme and module specifications for approval by Navitas and the University. Thereafter, standard University approval processes are followed. The fully developed proposals are scrutinised at a programme collaboration event conducted by a University panel, chaired by a senior member of University staff and including external membership, and attended by University subject staff and senior Navitas and UNIC representatives. Navitas procedures require final programme approval to be formally notified to the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC), the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB) and the relevant University committee. Similar processes apply to programme modifications.

1.35 Navitas programme design principles require an appropriate level of challenge and rigour. UNIC programme specifications and definitive module documents are completed within Navitas templates, requiring standards-related information to be provided, including FHEQ level, benchmarking group credit value and learning outcomes mapping.

1.36 The policies and procedures in place ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for qualifications. The arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.37 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing procedural, programme approval and other documentation, including programme and module specifications, award maps and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

1.38 Relevant, detailed information is submitted for business case approval. The academic approval stage follows the University process. The first suite of programmes to be run at UNIC were considered and approved at a University programme collaboration event held in June 2015; further programmes were approved at a subsequent event held in March 2016.

1.39 Programme collaboration panels, chaired by a senior University staff member and including external membership, scrutinise a range of documentation, including draft programme specifications, award maps and definitive module documents. The relevant reports confirm that standards are set at the appropriate level.

1.40 UNIC programme specifications locate programmes at the appropriate levels of the FHEQ/Regulated Qualifications Framework and the Council of Europe common language reference level; specify learning outcomes appropriately aligned with relevant qualifications descriptors; assign credit values in alignment with the UK credit framework; reference

relevant Subject Benchmark Statements; and map module assessment schemes to learning outcomes. Module specifications provide similar information at the level of the module.

1.41 Available meeting minutes record discussion of programme development at the AAC and JSPMB. However, programme approvals to date, while signed off via programme collaboration events and through the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee, have not been formally notified to the AAC and JSPMB.

1.42 The review team **recommends** that UNIC ensure that final approval of programmes is formally notified to relevant committees in accordance with Navitas procedures.

1.43 Programme approval processes operate effectively to ensure that academic standards are set at the appropriate level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A3.2): 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**

1.44 Navitas programme design principles require all programmes to adhere to national guidelines on credit volume, enabling students to achieve the outcomes expected at each stage of study, to consider aims and learning outcomes to the onward stages of study at the University, and to ensure that all intended learning outcomes are clearly identified, developed and assessed, as appropriate for progression to the next stage of study.

1.45 The Navitas standard programme and module specification templates provide for the articulation of learning outcomes relating to knowledge and understanding, and cognitive/intellectual, practical, transferable and key generic skills. The programme specification template requires learning outcomes to be mapped against individual modules, and the module specification template provides for a definitive statement of the learning outcomes to be assessed at the level of the module, together with mapping against individual assessments.

1.46 The Navitas assessment regulations require the operation of a two-tier system of formal processes to agree assessment outcomes, comprising UNIC module panels and college progression assessment boards.

1.47 UNIC Learning and Teaching Board, in consultation with the University of Northampton's disability services and the Navitas Quality and Standards Office is responsible for ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made for students with a disability. Such students are required to undertake the same assessments as other students, the nature of any reasonable adjustment, such as extra time or assistive technology, being determined by the student's specific needs.

1.48 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.49 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing regulatory, procedural and other documents, including Navitas policy and procedural documents, programme and module specifications, and module panel and progression assessment board meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

1.50 Programme and module specifications, which are scrutinised at programme approval, set out learning outcomes in accordance with Navitas requirements. Programme learning outcomes are aligned with the requirements of the FHEQ and mapped against individual modules. Module documentation and individual assessment briefs specify the learning outcomes to be assessed at module level.

1.51 For UNIC-delivered modules, formally constituted module panels and progression assessment boards convened under Navitas regulations operate effectively, respectively

confirming module marks and making decisions regarding student progression to the next stage of study. Marks for level 4 University-delivered modules are confirmed through the University's module board process. Final outcomes decisions for Standard Plus and Integrated level 4 students are considered and ratified by both the University's Award and Status Board and by UNIC's progression assessment board.

1.52 The reasonable adjustment needs of students with a disability, who are identified through the admissions process or subsequently during the programme, are assessed and met on a case-by-case basis.

1.53 Processes operate effectively to ensure that credit is awarded only where the achievement of learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment and UK threshold standards have been satisfied. 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**

1.54 Navitas programme monitoring and review regulations, which are outlined in the UNIC Collaborative Operations Manual, require the annual review of all UNIC programmes under Navitas processes, and incorporate University of Northampton annual tracer studies. These processes are supplemented by interim and quinquennial partnership review undertaken by the University.

1.55 Annual programme monitoring is designed to ensure that academic standards and the quality of provision is maintained and enhanced. With respect to academic standards, the process requires the monitoring of students' performance (pass, progression and retention rates) at UNIC. Students' performance following progression to the University is also monitored through the University's tracer studies. The monitoring process also considers feedback from academic staff and University moderators; and provides the opportunity to update assessment regimes. Actions arising from the previous year's report must be revisited and reviewed - although this requirement does not apply to programmes that, like UNIC's programmes in 2016-17, are in the first year of delivery.

1.56 The process draws on a broad range of information relating to academic standards, including moderation reports, key issues and action points arising from module reviews, and student performance data.

1.57 Annual programme monitoring reports must be completed in the Navitas template and, following submission to UNIC Learning and Teaching Board for approval, forwarded to the relevant University faculty and the Navitas Quality and Standards Office, and presented at the UNIC Academic Advisory Committee (AAC).

1.58 The arrangements for programme monitoring and review would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.59 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing procedural documentation, ongoing programme monitoring documentation, completed module monitoring reports, draft programme monitoring reports, standard meeting agendas and meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

1.60 The first students were admitted to UNIC programmes in September 2016. At the date of the review, the first annual programme monitoring cycle had not been completed and annual programme monitoring reports were still in draft form. However, the review team verified that throughout the year, the AAC had maintained ongoing oversight of academic outcomes, and received data on student progression to the University, via formal reporting by UNIC Director Principal.

1.61 Sample module summary reports available to the review team, completed in the standard template, provide summary module statistics, together with evaluation of student performance. Monitoring activity for the first annual cycle culminated in pathway programme

annual monitoring review meetings attended by University heads of partnership programmes and link tutors, together with UNIC academic staff and student representatives. In accordance with the standard agenda, discussion covered the areas to be addressed in the Navitas report template, which, for academic standards, includes assessment and progression data, and assessment and feedback review. The draft annual programme monitoring reports available to the review team generally provide comprehensive analysis of student performance, with reflective commentary and the identification of any appropriate action arising.

1.62 The University conducted an interim review of UNIC in November 2017. The review report, still in draft form at the time of the QAA review, confirms that the processes in place to ensure that academic standards are maintained are being implemented by UNIC in accordance with Navitas requirements.

1.63 The outcomes of the University's first tracer study were not available at the date of the review.

1.64 While at the date of the review the first annual monitoring cycle was not yet completed, the available evidence demonstrates the effective implementation of programme monitoring processes with regard to academic standards up to the present point in the cycle. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

**Expectation (A3.4): 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**

1.65 University of Northampton processes provide externality and external expertise in programme design and approval, when academic standards are set. Externality is provided by University senior and faculty staff to ensure that academic standards are being maintained and achieved.

1.66 The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.67 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing programme approval and other documentation, including programme specifications, award maps and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

1.68 UNIC and University colleagues work together on programme design; during this process, proposed UNIC programmes are closely mapped to the progression routes at the University to ensure that standards are set at the correct level. The formal programme approval stage, which operates under University processes, includes appropriate externality and involves scrutiny of programme specifications to ensure alignment with the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and other external reference points.

1.69 Senior University staff provide ongoing external scrutiny within the academic quality committee framework through membership of the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board and the Academic Advisory Committee. These groups are responsible for ensuring that academic standards are maintained in accordance with agreed benchmarks, and that academic standards are effectively discharged, particularly through scrutiny of student academic outcomes. Externality is provided at programme level through the external moderator role undertaken by University link tutors (see Expectation B7).

1.70 External expertise is used effectively to ensure that academic standards are set and maintained at the appropriate level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



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

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

1.72 Six of the seven Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk. The exception is Expectation A2.1, which received was not met, with a moderate level of risk. While UNIC has a comprehensive academic framework and related regulations, procedure outlined in the Quality Manual had not been consistently followed.

1.73 There were two recommendations in this judgement area: the first under Expectation A2.1 and the second under Expectation A3.1, which also relates to Expectation B1. There were no instances of good practice or affirmations identified.

1.74 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at UNIC **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

#### **Findings**

2.1 UNIC programme design and approval processes operate within the Navitas policy and procedural framework and in accordance with the programme approval provisions of the UNIC Collaborative Operations Manual, which align with Navitas requirements. The processes require pathway and programme design to be undertaken by UNIC, with input from appropriate University of Northampton subject specialist staff, and oversight by the Navitas Quality and Standards Office. Programmes must operate in accordance with Navitas policies and regulations, and a range of matters are to be considered in programme design, including the learning needs of international students; inclusivity; academic challenge; the development of independent, reflective learning; employability skills and inter-disciplinary language competence; relevant University strategies and policies; and the requirements of onward university study.

2.2 The fully developed proposals are scrutinised at a programme collaboration event conducted by a University panel chaired by a senior member of University staff and including external membership, and attended by University subject staff and senior Navitas and UNIC representatives. Navitas procedures require final programme approval to be formally notified to the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC), the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB) and the relevant University committee. Similar processes apply to programme modifications.

2.3 With respect to the quality of student learning opportunities, the remit of the programme approval panel, which is clearly described within the Navitas framework, is to consider the appropriateness of the curriculum for progression to the prescribed articulation point at the University in terms of its level, learning outcomes and academic rigour, the progression criteria, resources and academic management, and to agree any amendments to the proposals.

2.4 The arrangements in place for the design, development and approval of programmes to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.5 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing procedural, programme approval and other documentation, including programme and module specifications, award maps and minutes of meetings. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

2.6 The first suite of UNIC programmes was considered and approved at a University programme collaboration event held in June 2015; further programmes were approved at a subsequent event held in March 2016. UNIC staff worked closely with University subject staff on programme design, with input and guidance from Navitas colleagues and the Quality and Standards Office. The March 2016 programme collaboration report commended the close cooperation and liaison between Navitas/UNIC and University schools in programme design,

as evidence by, by the detailed and collaborative mapping activity. The progress of programme development was tracked and discussed by senior UNIC and University staff via the AAC and JSPMB.

2.7 The design considerations identified by Navitas are incorporated into programme design. Completed programme and module specifications confirm that programmes are designed to address the needs of an international student cohort, operate within Navitas policies and regulations, align with University policies and protocols, and develop students' academic, practical and language skills, in particular to facilitate their transition to University study.

2.8 The University academic approval process, which included appropriate externality, involved the examination of a range of documentation, including draft programme specifications, award maps, definitive module documents, the assessment regulations and policy documents covering admissions, attendance and monitoring, student support and student engagement. Scrutiny covered specific aspects of the curriculum structure and content, liaison arrangements between UNIC and the University, the operational delivery, management and resourcing of the programmes and the student experience.

2.9 The AAC maintains appropriate oversight of the operation of programme design and development, reporting to the JSPMB. However, the review team made a recommendation under Expectation A3.1 that UNIC ensure that the final approval of programmes be formally notified to relevant committees in accordance with Navitas procedures.

2.10 Overall, processes for the design, development and approval of programmes work effectively to assure the quality of student learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.11 Recruitment of students is managed centrally by UNIC, and there is a detailed admissions process. The Navitas Central Admissions and Recruitment Centre manages the whole process, recruiting through a network of approved agents in target countries. Agents receive training to support students effectively in making the correct choice of course and location. There is a Navitas Agent Management Strategy and UNIC evaluates the performance of agents through the annual student survey. Admissions criteria are agreed with the University through programme approval events and are reported to both the Academic Advisory Committee and the Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Committee. The criteria are listed in programme specification documents, in UNIC brochures, and on the website. UNIC ensures that its marketing and recruitment strategy complies with and supports the activities of the University of Northampton's International Office. This is achieved through the Marketing, Planning and Admissions Committee.

2.12 Students who are defined as being non-standard are considered by the Academic Board, which is a sub-board of the UNIC management team. The process involves assessing additional information.

2.13 Students are asked to report disabilities when they apply for admission, and any reasonable adjustments are made prior to the student's arrival.

2.14 The admissions process, with its associated procedures, documentation and website information, would allow the Expectation to be met

2.15 In order to test this Expectation, the review team examined the admissions processes documentation and the information on the website relating to admissions. It also examined the role of agents and the training that was available to them. The review team met with staff involved with recruitment and admissions, as well as asking students about their admission experience.

2.16 Agents play a central role in the recruitment policy. Accordingly, Navitas conducts thorough checks prior to contracting with an agent. Agents are supported by the Navitas Central Admissions and Recruitment Centre and source country office teams.

2.17 Students whom the review team met felt that they had been well supported and advised through the process of making an informed decision, by both admissions staff and agents. They understood how the admissions process worked, were clear about what they needed to do, and felt appropriately prepared for entry to UNIC.

2.18 There is evidence of inclusive and thorough recruitment policies, and carefully detailed procedures for recruitment, selection and admission of students. 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**

2.19 Navitas has a Learning and Teaching Strategy, which is managed by the central Learning and Teaching Committee, on which each centre is represented. The focus of the Strategy is on the student experience and it is informed by Navitas policy frameworks and the requirements of each partner university. The Strategy sets out the broad aims and objectives; UNIC has a Learning and Teaching Board, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the learning and teaching objectives. The responsibilities of UNIC and the University of Northampton in relation to learning resources, staffing and programme delivery are set out in the Collaborative Operations Manual.

2.20 The policies and processes in place in relation to learning and teaching would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.21 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing documentation, including policy documents. The team also looked at committee minutes; items related to teaching staff, including teaching observation; and the learning charter. The review team met staff and students to discuss matters related to teaching and learning.

2.22 UNIC is responsible for the appointment of staff teaching on its programmes, and recruits staff in accordance with Navitas policies and procedures. The University assists with the recruiting of new staff, and the Dean of the relevant faculty in the University approves the appointment. All UNIC staff have right of access to all facilities and resources in the University, including staff development opportunities. All staff are given an induction and are subject to both management and peer observation of teaching.

2.23 Students the review team met were positive about the teaching and the level of support they received. Students confirmed that they receive timely and helpful feedback on their work. In addition, they commented that teaching and support staff were approachable and offered additional support whenever it was necessary. Additional sessions were organised for students needing particular support.

2.24 Students have access to learning resources both at UNIC and the University. Students who met the review team found the learning resources available to them, including the library, computing and laboratory facilities and the VLE, appropriate to all their needs. There is a Student Academic Handbook and all teaching material and necessary information about their programme, UNIC and the University is available online.

2.25 UNIC collects feedback on teaching through a student survey at the end of each module, and also through matters raised by students at the Student Forum and at the Learning and Teaching Board.

2.26 Learning resources and student support are in place to support student learning and achievement and prepare students for university study. There are also systematic and effective assurance and review processes in place to ensure quality of provision is

enhanced. The review team concludes 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**

2.27 UNIC works within the framework set by Navitas for supporting student development. It has a strong commitment to enabling students to develop their academic and personal potential. There is a clear structure in place to provide support and academic services. This is led by the UNIC Director and the Director of Academic and Student Services. In addition, students have access to specialist services in the University. The quality of the student experience is seen as key from first contact onwards.

2.28 UNIC has appropriate policies and processes in place to monitor and evaluate the services and resources needed to enable students to develop their potential, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.29 In order to test the effectiveness of UNIC's policies and procedures, the review team reviewed policies and processes, committee minutes and handbooks. The team also discussed the availability of academic and support services and the development of skills for higher education with staff and students.

2.30 UNIC provides a range of effective services that enable students to develop their academic and personal potential. This support begins before the student arrives at UNIC, with an offer pack containing admission information and a link to a pre-departure microsite. Upon arrival, students have an induction programme. Once on the programme, the quality of the student experience is seen as central, this is achieved by adopting and embedding a number of key principles in delivering and supporting its programmes. This includes small classes, varied teaching methods and the availability of both support and teaching staff. A key element of the way in which students are supported is by the provision of a 'core' comprehensive learning skills acquisition module known as the Interactive Learning Skills and Communication module. The provision of this module is central to the way students are prepared for successful transition to university study.

2.31 To ensure the appropriate level of student support is provided, staff continually monitor each student's academic performance and overall experience during their time at UNIC. Students who are underperforming are placed in the Student in Jeopardy programme, and receive targeted additional support. The effectiveness of this programme is reviewed and monitored at the Learning and Teaching Board and Academic Board, and by the UNIC management team. Students are taught in small groups to facilitate the acquisition of module learning outcomes, and receive additional support when needed. Students the review team met were positive about the way UNIC enabled them to develop and achieve. There is a clear focus by UNIC on building effective transition processes from students' Navitas programmes onto their University of Northampton degrees. A number of different tactics are used to achieve this objective. These include working with link tutors, and using University laboratories and other facilities.

2.32 The high levels of academic and personal support offered to students, which provides a highly effective preparation for their transition to the University, is **good practice**. Information about student services is provided in student handbooks and available online through the VLE.

2.33 UNIC, with Navitas and the University of Northampton, operates effectively to enable students to develop their academic and personal potential. The review team 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**

2.34 Navitas regards student engagement as central to the vision, mission and operations of the organisation and its colleges. The Navitas UK Policy and Regulations for the formal engagement of students apply across the network. These provisions are reiterated in the UNIC Student Representation Policy, which provides additional detail on student representative elections, including the election of a Student President (see Expectation A2.1). In line with this policy framework, UNIC seeks to ensure student participation and engagement in the enhancement of their educational experience through student surveys, the Student Forum and the student representative system.

2.35 UNIC conducts a post-enrolment survey and student module evaluation surveys, and students are invited to complete the Navitas student satisfaction survey and the i-graduate student barometer survey. Student representatives, elected by their peers for each class group, are charged with representing the collective student voice at the Student Forum, which is chaired by the Student President, and in annual module review meetings. The Learning and Teaching Board, College Enhancement Team (CET) meetings, the Operational Advisory Committee and the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) include student representative membership. Student representatives are also responsible for collating and analysing the outcomes of student module evaluation and producing a written summary for incorporation into annual module reports

2.36 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.37 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing policy documentation, the student representative handbook and training materials, student evaluation summaries, annual module reports, student survey documentation, committee terms of reference and meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

2.38 All students are encouraged to complete the post-enrolment survey, the Navitas student satisfaction survey and module evaluation surveys. Students have also been invited to take part in the upcoming i-graduate survey. Post-enrolment survey outcomes are analysed and an appropriate action plan produced. Navitas survey outcomes are presented to the AAC and, although at the date of the review formal action planning had not taken place, there was some evidence of relevant themes being discussed at the Student Forum and CET. Student feedback forms part of UNIC's management teaching observation process, where it is used effectively to inform learning and teaching enhancements.

2.39 Student representatives, normally two for each class group, and a Student President are elected by their peers. Student representatives, including the Student President, whom the review team met, were clear and enthusiastic about their role, which, together with useful tips on how to be effective and guidance on closing the feedback loop through communication with their peers, is set out fully in the Student Representative Handbook.

2.40 The Student Forum, which is well attended by staff and students, provides an effective mechanism for students to raise issues of concern, and a useful communication channel between UNIC staff and the student body. The Student President's role as chair

promotes student ownership of the meetings and provides invaluable experience for the Student President in post. Student representatives attend and actively participate in CET and Learning and Teaching Board meetings, which receive feedback from the Student Forum as well as considering wider quality and enhancement matters. Student representatives also attend the AAC and Operational Advisory Committee, and engage directly with annual monitoring through participation in annual monitoring review meetings.

2.41 In accordance with their role, student representatives prepare written summaries of the outcomes of the online student module evaluation surveys, which are conducted each semester. These summary reports, which are completed by student representatives, are highly effective in informing the annual module reports and action plans produced by tutors.

2.42 The student representative system, which facilitates students' active engagement in quality assurance and enhancement, is **good practice**.

2.43 Students confirm that enhancements adopted in response to their feedback are effectively communicated to them through the student portal, Student Forum, CET meetings and 'You Said We Did' posters. The University of Northampton interim review found that students' suggestions for improvements or changes are responded to positively by UNIC, which seeks to accommodate them where feasible to the benefit of student experience.

2.44 The arrangements in place work effectively to engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

**Findings**

2.45 Navitas regulations articulate the principles of assessment, including fairness, robustness, validity of learning outcomes, clarity of procedures, and the provision of appropriate feedback to students. This regulatory framework, which applies across the network, covers the conduct of examinations, marking, internal and external moderation, feedback to students, mitigating circumstances, reasonable adjustments, academic misconduct, module panels and progression boards. The UNIC Collaborative Operations Manual details assessment-related academic and administrative processes and responsibilities agreed with the University of Northampton.

2.46 The processes provide for the assessment and marking of all UNIC-delivered modules to be undertaken by UNIC tutors, with external moderation by University link tutors for the pre-master's and level 4 modules. All University-delivered modules are assessed and marked by University staff.

2.47 Navitas specifies the range of assessment information to be made available to students, including weightings, grading criteria, submission dates and timetable for the provision of feedback. Tutors are required to make feedback available to students within 10 working days of the scheduled submission deadline.

2.48 Module panels and progression assessment boards must be convened by UNIC for foundation, pre-master's and UNIC-delivered (Standard) level 4 modules and students. Marks for level 4 University-delivered modules are confirmed through the University's module board process. Standard Plus and integrated level 4 students are considered both by the University's Award and Status Board and by UNIC's Progression Board, both of which must ratify final outcomes decisions.

2.49 Principles and processes relating to the recognition of prior learning are clearly documented, rigorous and appropriate. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.50 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing regulatory, procedural and other documentation, including programme and module specifications and module guides, student handbooks, assignment briefs, and module panel and progression assessment board meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

2.51 Programme and module specifications and module guides, completed in the standard templates, set out fully the programme assessment strategies, module assessment types, methods and weightings, assessed learning outcomes, and assessment criteria. The Student Academic Handbook and programme handbooks provide students with information about marking and moderation, resits, academic misconduct, exam regulations and procedure, assignment submission, deadlines and feedback on assessed work. Students confirmed that they have access to this information and understand what is required of them in assessment, including the rules on academic misconduct and how to

avoid it. Students also confirmed that feedback on their work is helpful and provided in a timely fashion to meet the relevant deadlines. Turnitin, through which completed assignments are submitted, is used by students to help them avoid plagiarism and by tutors to identify plagiarised work. Students have access to assessment regulations on the VLE.

2.52 A useful marking workflow document assists UNIC tutors in their internal marking and moderation role, and these processes operate in accordance with the formal requirements. Staff development provision at UNIC includes sessions on the assessment of students.

2.53 Module panels and progression assessment boards operate in accordance with the applicable regulations. Module panels, which are chaired by the UNIC Director, and attended by link tutors in their external moderation role, are convened by UNIC at the end of each semester. UNIC progression assessment boards, also chaired by the UNIC Director, and attended by University senior staff, University link tutors and UNIC teaching staff, receive confirmed module marks and make progression, re-assessment and mitigating circumstances decisions.

2.54 Applications to UNIC programmes seeking recognition of prior learning are considered and decided by the Academic Board under non-standard entry processes.

2.55 Assessment processes operate fairly and in accordance with the applicable regulations. Students are clear as to what is required of them in assessment.

2.56 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

2.57 The Navitas regulatory framework, which applies across the network, requires externality in the moderation of assessment for pre-master's and UNIC-delivered level 4 modules. This requirement can be satisfied through external moderation conducted by University of Northampton staff and, while external examiners may be appointed, this is not a requirement. The UNIC Collaborative Operations Manual details assessment-related academic and administrative processes and responsibilities, including the moderation of assessment, agreed with the University.

2.58 With respect to all modules in scope, the documented processes require the external moderation of the highest weighted module assessments, identify sample sizes, and specify moderators' rights and responsibilities. At UNIC, external moderation is normally carried out by University link tutors. The process, which follows on from the assignment verification and moderation stages conducted internally by UNIC tutors, involves scrutiny of assignment briefs, exam papers, specimen answers, marking schemes, and sample student work. The processes provide for external moderator comments and recommendations on proposed assessment tasks to inform appropriate amendments by UNIC tutors.

2.59 University link tutors are members of UNIC module panels, in their external moderator role, and are also members of the UNIC progression assessment boards.

2.60 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.61 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing regulatory, procedural and other documentation, including module panel and progression assessment board meeting minutes, marking and moderator records, annual module reports and draft annual programme reports. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

2.62 UNIC has expressed an intention to make use of external examiners, in addition to the internal and external moderation processes it has followed to date. Discussions with the University and Navitas on how University processes for the appointment of external examiners could be replicated at UNIC have been initiated.

2.63 The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to establish policies and procedures for the appointment of external examiners to all programmes.

2.64 Academic staff confirmed to the review team that University link tutors have online access to the full range of module materials, including assessment documentation, although the extent and use by UNIC tutors of link tutor feedback on proposed assessment briefs and examination papers was unclear.

2.65 Clear marking and moderation records are produced by UNIC tutors and external University moderators within a standard template. External moderators use this template, together with the annual module report template, to provide comments, typically including feedback on standards, the assessment process and the quality of feedback to students. Meeting minutes confirm link tutor attendance at module panel and progression assessment board meetings, and module panel minutes record their approval and confirmation of the grades awarded, together with their comments, as external moderators.

2.66 The Navitas annual programme monitoring template invites link tutor comments on the programme and requires the programme team to set out an action plan for the coming year. At the date of the present review, annual programme reports for the first annual cycle were still in draft and the relevant sections had not yet been completed.

2.67 The recent University interim review examined the operation of external moderation processes. The report, which was still in draft at the date of the QAA review, concludes that these processes are being implemented in accordance with the regulatory requirements.

2.68 Overall, external moderation processes operate effectively. The review team concludes that the Expectation is 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**

2.69 Navitas programme monitoring and review regulations, which are outlined in the UNIC Collaborative Operations Manual, require the annual review of all UNIC programmes under Navitas processes, and incorporate University of Northampton annual tracer studies. These processes are supplemented by interim and quinquennial partnership review undertaken by the University.

2.70 Annual programme monitoring is designed to ensure that academic standards and the quality of provision is maintained and enhanced. Drawing on a range of information, including feedback from academic staff, students and link tutors, the process requires confirmation that all aims and learning outcomes are being met by the programme, analysis of feedback, and review of learning, teaching, assessment, facilities and resources and student support.

2.71 The programme monitoring process and the accompanying Navitas reporting template incorporate an enhancement focus, explicitly requiring reports to revisit the previous year's report and review actions arising, including innovative and/or noteworthy practice; to record progress on a specified enhancement theme; to outline plans to develop and improve the programme in the light of the review; to identify key actions arising from feedback; and to set out an action plan for the coming year.

2.72 At UNIC, student representatives are responsible for collating and analysing the results of module questionnaires and providing a written summary for incorporation into tutors' module reports, which feed into the annual monitoring process.

2.73 The maintenance of strategic institutional oversight of annual monitoring processes and outcomes is required, through submission of reports to the UNIC Learning and Teaching Board for approval and their subsequent presentation to the Academic Advisory Committee. Reports must also be forwarded to the relevant University faculty and the Navitas Quality and Standards Office.

2.74 University annual and periodic review processes comprise annual tracer studies on UNIC cohorts to monitor student progress during the University stages of their degree pathways to final award, interim partner review at the end of year 1 of the partnership, and periodic partner review on a five-year cycle.

2.75 The arrangements for monitoring and review would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.76 The review team examined the effectiveness of the practices and procedures by reviewing procedural documentation, ongoing programme monitoring documentation, completed module monitoring reports, draft programme monitoring reports, standard meeting agendas and meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff, University link tutors, and students.

2.77 The first students were admitted to UNIC programmes in September 2016. At the time of the review, the first annual programme monitoring cycle had not been completed and annual programme monitoring reports were still in draft form. However, the review team saw evidence of documented, ongoing module monitoring, which will inform programme reporting

on the quality of students' learning opportunities for the 2016-17 academic year, including module evaluation summary reports prepared by student representatives, moderator feedback and thorough, comprehensive module reports with action plans.

2.78 Monitoring activity for the first annual cycle culminated in pathway programme annual monitoring review meetings held in November 2017 and attended by University Heads of Partnership Programmes, University link tutors, UNIC academic staff and student representatives. In accordance with the standard agenda, discussion covered the areas to be addressed in the Navitas report template, which, for the quality and enhancement of students' learning opportunities, includes learning, teaching, assessment and feedback review, student evaluation, the student experience and facilities and resources. The draft annual programme monitoring reports available to the review team reviewed all these areas, identifying actions for enhancement.

2.79 The University conducted an interim review of UNIC in November 2017. The review report, still in draft at the date of the QAA review, reports positively on the quality of students' learning opportunities at UNIC.

2.80 While at the time of the review the first annual monitoring cycle was not yet completed, the available evidence demonstrates the effective implementation of programme monitoring processes with regard to the quality of students' learning opportunities up to the present point in the cycle. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

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



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

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

**Findings**

2.81 UNIC manages academic appeals and student complaints in line with the policies set out in Navitas UK Policy and Regulation (NPR) QS 10, Student Appeals and Grievances, and NPR QS 11, Student Disciplinary Policy. This is also set out in the Collaborative Operations Manual. Students have the right to complain directly to the University of Northampton in matters that are the responsibility of the University, including University services or staff. A copy of the complaints and appeals procedure is available on the Student Portal.

2.82 The policy provides details of what a student can appeal against. It states that, generally, all appeals are made informally. Appeals can be made against results, progression to the next stage and entitlement of award. Students studying on a UNIC pathway have the right to appeal against the outcome of an assessment on the grounds of extenuating circumstances affecting their performance, or a material irregularity in the assessment.

2.83 The policies and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.84 The review team looked at the Collaborative Operations Manual, the NPRs, student handbook and the VLE, and also sought clarification of the process through talking to staff and students.

2.85 The evidence shows that clear processes are in place for handling student complaints and appeals, and staff and students are aware of the process.

2.86 Students who wish to appeal or complain would normally seek advice from support staff for information on the procedure, and would be referred to the relevant documentation. Students are encouraged to raise concerns informally or through the student representative system before invoking the formal process. Students met by the review team were aware of the appeals and complaints procedure.

2.87 The process for making a complaint or appeal is clear, easy to access, transparent and fair. Although the majority of concerns are handled informally there is a clear pathway for formal procedures. The review team concludes the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

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

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

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

2.89 All nine of the Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk. Two examples of good practice have been identified, under Expectations B4 and B5, which relate to the high levels of effective support offered to students and the active engagement of learners in the student representative system. There is one affirmation, under Expectation B7, which relates to the introduction of external examiners on all courses. There are no recommendations in this judgement area, although the recommendation under Expectation A3.1 relates to Expectation B1.

2.90 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at UNIC **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 UNIC produces and uses a number of different types of information, which include marketing materials, student publications, course documentation and UNIC/Navitas policies. Navitas has a central department to assist with the design of communications and marketing material.

3.2 UNIC works closely with the University of Northampton on the development and approval of both online and off-line materials. It also works with Navitas to create a coordinated approach to the vetting and publishing of information. All UNIC material is signed off by the University in advance of publication, with Navitas having an overview.

3.3 Information for prospective students is available online, at recruitment events and by means of printed material. Full information on the process for application and admission to UNIC is provided on the UNIC website, with links to the University website. Prospective students are directed to the specific guidance on entry requirements, fees and scholarships. UNIC is developing introductory videos for each module, which will be available to students before they arrive.

3.4 Students are contacted prior to arrival with arrival instructions and essential information. Further information is provided during the induction.

3.5 Students receive confirmation of attainment at UNIC detailing their results on individual modules by means of a transcript.

3.6 The design of the policies and procedures in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.7 The review team reviewed online information, printed material, the student handbook and the VLE. Discussion with staff and students also took place regarding ease of access, accuracy and usefulness of information.

3.8 There is evidence of a strong relationship between UNIC and the University, and evidence of a good working partnership with regard to published information.

3.9 Students that the review team met confirmed that they found it easy to access all the information they needed, both in relation to academic and non-academic information. They had found the information when applying and during their time at UNIC helpful, comprehensive and accurate.

3.10 UNIC academic regulations, policies and procedures are included in the Collaborative Operations Manual. Some of the NPRs listed had been amended, both during the initial approval processes and subsequently. The review team found that UNIC versions were inconsistent and it was not always clear which was the current version. The review team **recommends** that UNIC ensure that all college versions of Navitas UK Policy and Regulations are fully documented, in accordance with Navitas policy, and are made

accessible to those responsible for academic standards and quality.

3.11 Information provided for prospective and current students is clear, easy to understand and accessible. It is updated regularly and a robust system is in place for checking accuracy of information, demonstrating a good working relationship between UNIC, the University and Navitas. However, this does not apply equally to information relating to the internal management of quality and standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Moderate**

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

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

3.13 The Expectation in this area is met with moderate risk. There is an associated recommendation that UNIC ensures that all UNIC versions of NPRs are fully documented in accordance with Navitas policy and are made accessible to those responsible for academic standards and quality.

3.14 There is no good practice or affirmations identified in this judgement area.

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

## 4 Commentary on 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 UNIC sees its approach to enhancement as founded principally on a 'You Said, We Did' culture, with student stakeholders at its core.

4.2 Section B5 of this report describes the various mechanisms designed to ensure that the UNIC student voice is heard, and that student feedback informs the development of initiatives at strategic level, which impact positively on the quality of the student experience.

4.3 Information is systematically gathered from students through various surveys and student representative membership of quality assurance and enhancement committees. This information is used effectively at module level, feeding into annual reporting and action planning, which provides clear evidence that good practice and opportunities for enhancement are identified. Similarly, at programme level, draft annual monitoring reports demonstrate that student evaluation of the provision is carefully analysed to identify good practice and enhancements. At the time of the QAA review, however, programme action plans were still to be completed.

4.4 While the evidence of systematic consideration, evaluation and use of student survey feedback at UNIC level was less compelling, student representative feedback in UNIC meetings clearly leads to positive and meaningful institutional responses. Numerous examples of institutional enhancement initiatives were provided by UNIC and much has been achieved in this regard in the comparatively short time in which UNIC has been operating. Notable examples include electronic assessment feedback through Turnitin, a new and improved student portal system, and the introduction of guest lectures and course-specific enrichment activities.

## 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 24-27 of the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\) 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.

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

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

### Credit(s)

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

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

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

### Dual award or double award

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

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

### **Enhancement**

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

### **Expectations**

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

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

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

### **Framework**

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

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

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

### **Good practice**

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

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

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

### **Operational definition**

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

### **Programme (of study)**

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



**Programme specifications**

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

**Quality Code**

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

**Reference points**

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

**Self-evaluation document**

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

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

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

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

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

**Threshold academic standard**

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

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**Widening participation**

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

QAA2095 - R9850 - Mar 18

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