



Higher Education Review of The University of Nottingham

April 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at The University of Nottingham. The review took place from 25 to 28 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of five reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw
- Mr Hugo Burchell
- Ms Ann Kettle
- Professor Diane Meehan
- Mr James Perkins (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 7.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

QAA's judgements about The University of Nottingham

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

- 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 is **commended**.

Good practice

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

- The Peer Observation College contributes to the University's strategic goal of ensuring that teaching is of the highest quality and held in high esteem (Expectation B3).
- The University has achieved one of its strategic goals by providing an extensive range of opportunities which enhance student employability (Expectation B4).
- The University has embedded engagement with students as partners both collectively and as individuals which makes a significant contribution to the enhancement of learning opportunities (Expectation B5 and Enhancement).
- The Teaching and Learning Review process actively supports the effective monitoring and review of academic provision and has a significant focus on the student learning experience and substantial student involvement (Expectation B8).
- The University's Transforming Teaching Programme has a central role and is particularly effective in enhancing the student learning experience (Enhancement).

Recommendations

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

By December 2016:

- develop a policy for change of course offers and ensure that students accepting a change of course offer are fully aware of the implications of making that decision (Expectation B2)
- develop a policy and associated procedures for handling admissions appeals and review the appropriateness and accessibility of its admissions complaints procedure (Expectation B2).

By April 2017:

- strengthen the reporting and oversight of student complaints (Expectation B9).

Theme: Student Employability

The University of Nottingham was founded on a philanthropic vision and carries this ethos through to its modern activities. The University aims to develop skilled, reflective global citizens and leaders.

Central to this approach is the Careers and Employability Service, which engages with the University at School and Faculty levels and across campuses. It is also responsible for management of the Nottingham Advantage Award, which allows students to earn up to 30 credits through reflections on extracurricular and cocurricular work.

The University is committed to developing programmes which prepare students for work and engages with employers to ensure that currency is maintained. It embeds employability in the curriculum by using a range of teaching and assessment methods as well as incorporating the use of technology common in the workplace.

Placements, including those for postgraduate students, are available to students and provide the opportunity to contextualise and apply what is learned on programmes. The University is seeking to extend the opportunity to undertake placements to all undergraduate students.

Students are encouraged to undertake paid employment provided through a range of in-house opportunities; the Nottingham Advantage Award has operated since 2008-09 and is intended to enable students to develop beyond what is covered by the curriculum.

The University is committed to enhancing student opportunity for development; the importance of employability is strategised and fully embedded in the education offered to students.

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 Nottingham

The origins of The University of Nottingham (the University) began in 1798 with the establishment of the Adult School. In 1881 the University College, Nottingham was opened on a site in the city centre, with the Charter of Incorporation granted in 1903. The University College moved, in 1928, to University Park, three miles west of the city, on a large estate of 135 acres. This site has been expanded over the years and today's 330-acre University Park campus is the result. In 1948, the University College was awarded the Royal Charter, becoming the University of Nottingham.

In 2000, in a joint venture with Boustead Holdings Berhad and YTL Corporation, the University opened a Malaysia Campus, located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur and in 2005 moved to a new site at Semenyih, 30 km from Kuala Lumpur. In 2004 the University opened The University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC), an opportunity enabled by legislation approved by the Chinese government on Sino-Foreign educational enterprises. In a joint venture with the Wanli University, the University developed and moved to a purpose-built campus located in Ningbo Higher Education Park in 2005. UNNC was the first sino-foreign university in China to be approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education.

The University of Nottingham thus hosts a global academic community in the United Kingdom, China and Malaysia and has been described by The Sunday Times University Guide 2015 as 'an outstanding student experience and a distinct approach to internationalisation'. It offers over 500 degree programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level across five faculties (Arts, Engineering, Medicine and Health Sciences,

Science, Social Sciences). The University of Nottingham student body is over 44,000, with approximately 33,500 students at the UK campus, 4,800 studying at UNMC and 6,200 at UNNC.

Its vision statement contains the following wording:

'The University of Nottingham is an inspiring place of learning and scholarship that transforms lives through:

- Offering an outstanding, broad-based, international education to talented students;
- Developing skilled, reflective global citizens and leaders;
- Undertaking fundamental and transformative discovery;
- Being committed to excellence, enterprise and social responsibility;
- Sustaining and improving the places and communities in which we are located; and
- Being engaged internationally to enhance industry, health and well-being, policy formation, culture and purposeful citizenship.'

Changes at the University since the last review include: revision of the management structure, changes to the committee structure which provides the oversight of quality assurance; changes to the School Review process and harmonisation of assessment practices.

The student submission (SS) described the University as being 'in flux', in particular in the way students are supported as the University will rollout Project Transform in 2016. This is a '...major IT project that will change the way students interact with the institution, and the university interacts with them'. The SS confirmed that the Students' Union has been involved formally in the project.

Key challenges currently faced by the University include meeting the significantly rising expectations of students. The University has identified its particular strengths and unique relationships to develop an offer which differentiates the University from other higher education institutions in the UK and as a global provider.

Changes in Government policy with regard to student visa applications and costs have resulted in a decrease in applications from international applicants, both in the UK and at UNMC, where significant and immediate changes make it difficult for international students to enter the country by the start of session to take up their places. UNMC has had to adapt and implement additional measures to ensure the student experience has been safeguarded, in some cases leading to educational innovation.

The smooth operation and delivery of programmes and their quality assurance across three campuses is something that the University monitors continuously and strives to improve. In particular, there is a need to meet the quality assurance requirements of the government bodies in the countries concerned.

The University received one advisable and four desirable recommendations in its 2009 review. Overall the review team in 2016 found that the institution had responded fully to the recommendations and, in one case, had developed its processes extensively. Since 2009, the University has been working towards more harmonisation of its assessment practices; while there is still work to be done, the review team was confident that much progress had been made and that future plans would further secure consistency across the institution. The University has also extended its scrutiny of external examiner reports at institutional level and this also now forms part of the annual monitoring process. A pilot initiative to raise awareness of the reports among students is also underway.

Institutional oversight of annual monitoring has been strengthened since 2009 and now operates effectively with strong student engagement. The process of periodic review has evolved into the Teaching and Learning Review. This has increased student involvement, is managed efficiently and effectively ensures the currency of curricula. The 2016 review team found that the work done following the recommendation of the 2009 team in this regard has resulted in a process that is a feature of good practice.

The University has also acted upon the features of good practice noted in the 2009 review and has sought to further embed and build on these.

Explanation of the findings about The University of Nottingham

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 of Nottingham Qualifications Framework (UNQF) provides the University with a governance structure for all its qualifications, allowing it to map the learning outcomes and assessment of courses to defined levels, and assure itself that appropriate progression occurs between levels and qualifications are named appropriately. All awards within the UNQF are defined in minimum credit values, which comply with the HE Credit Framework for England. There is a Quality Manual that aligns with the Expectations and Indicators set out in the Quality Code. The Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) is responsible for the maintenance of the Quality Manual.

1.2 The UNQF and the processes and procedures described in the Quality Manual would enable the University to meet the Expectation.

1.3 The Expectation was tested by the review team by reading documentation describing the approval of new programmes, periodic review activities, the web catalogue of programme specifications, and various committee papers, and through meetings with a number of academic and professional services staff.

1.4 UNQF defines the level and volume of study required for a comprehensive range of taught awards covering foundation certificates (120 credits at Level 0 or above) to taught master's degrees (180 credits with at least 150 credits at Level 7, or 240 credits with at least 210 credits at Level 7 if taught in collaboration with other European universities).

A University of Nottingham credit equates to 10 hours of notional study. The University states that the Quality Code is the key reference point in the management of its academic standards. This is confirmed by a document that maps the UNQF to the Expectations of the Quality Code. The levels and credits of the UNQF map directly onto the Quality Assurance Agency qualification descriptors. The UNQF also includes professional doctorates, which it defines as research degrees. The UNQF is designed to be fully compatible with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) as well as the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (FHEQ-EHEA).

1.5 The approval process for new programmes includes confirmation that they meet the minimum requirements for qualification in terms of number and level of credits. A wide range of documentation, including guidance on external input for new programmes, Teaching and Learning Review documents and the student submission, confirm that careful attention is paid to the UNQF and Subject Benchmark Statements to ensure that national frameworks play a full and proper part in securing threshold academic standards.

1.6 Scrutiny of the online repository of programme specifications confirmed that Nottingham awards comply with the UNQF; though, given the comprehensive nature of the UNQF, it would be difficult for an award not to fit within its scope.

1.7 The alignment between programmes of study and their stated learning outcomes is considered at approval and then confirmed through the Teaching and Learning Review process. The alignment has been made easier through the introduction of the Rogo software that can provide information about the match between learning outcomes and assessments.

1.8 Staff and students the review team met reported they were aware of the UNQF. Staff found the framework helpful when designing new programmes. Students met by the team understood the requirements for levels of study and numbers of credits when choosing their options.

1.9 For the Ningbo and Malaysia campuses, mapping exercises have been conducted between the UNQF, the QAA qualification descriptors, the Chinese Ministry of Education framework, and the Malaysian Qualifications Framework to ensure there are no conflicts.

1.10 Alignment of programmes of study to the UNQF, following guidance in the Quality Manual, and the monitoring of this alignment at programme approval and review ensure that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.11 The University's study regulations are published in the Quality Manual. They provide the general rules by which programmes should operate. The University is governed by two bodies: Council and Senate. Council is responsible for approving the strategic plans of the University and is ultimately responsible for its finances, buildings and staff, while Senate carries the academic authority of the University. Senate is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and includes all Heads of Schools, PVCs, FPVCs, Provosts, Chair of Quality and Standards Committee, elected representatives of the professors who are not Heads of Schools, elected representatives of the non-professorial staff, International Campus representatives, and members of the Students' Union. There are five Faculties, each headed by a Faculty PVC. Faculties, with the exception of Engineering, consist of academic schools. The international campuses are each managed by a Provost, together with a Management Board. The governance structures mirror those of the Nottingham campuses. The regulations and committee structures would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team tested this Expectation by scrutinising a range of documentation, including regulations, committee terms of reference, membership and minutes, and through meetings with senior, teaching and support staff.

1.13 Senate and Council both operate through a network of committees. In the case of Council, the principal committees are University Executive Board, the Finance Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee. For Senate the main committees are the Research Committee, the Teaching and Learning Board (TLB) and the Promotions Committee. Committee papers confirm that Teaching and Learning Board has primary responsibility for maintaining academic standards on behalf of Senate, and that the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) assists TLB to oversee the application of all University regulations, policies and procedures in respect of quality and standards. Senior staff reported that the relatively recent establishment of the TLB and the QSC had provided the University with sufficient institutional oversight of quality assurance processes.

1.14 The University ensures consistency of operation across the Faculties and Schools through representation of the Faculties on the Teaching and Learning Board. Each of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees has a representative on the TLB. Each of the international campuses is represented by its Vice-Provost. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience, working together with the five Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellors, assists in disseminating strategy and ensuring that action is taken in the Schools. Together, this representation provides appropriate reporting mechanisms between committees at University, Faculty and School levels.

1.15 The study regulations that provide the general rules by which programmes should operate, as recorded in the Quality Manual, are supplemented for individual programmes by the programme specifications. Students confirmed that they received handbooks and access to the Regulations and Quality Manual. Committee papers confirm that Quality and Standards Committee is active in reviewing and updating the regulations on a regular basis.

1.16 The review team concludes that the academic framework is comprehensive and the committee structure is effective. Regulations are reviewed regularly and made available to staff and students, with guidance available to staff on their application. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.17 The University maintains a searchable database of current and recent programme specifications all its taught programmes. They are used as the single source of regulatory and administrative information concerning programmes. The constituent module specifications are provided in an online Module Specifications Catalogue.

1.18 The web catalogues of programme specifications and modules would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.19 The team tested the Expectation by examining the web catalogues of programmes and modules, annual and periodic review documentation, programme handbooks, and committee papers, and through meetings with staff and students.

1.20 The web catalogues of programme specifications and modules are maintained by the Student Records System. The Quality Manual is clear that the information about programmes and modules belongs to the delivering School, and that University offices involved in processing or presenting a programme or module must ensure that the information has been agreed by the relevant School. Programme specifications are updated annually by Schools and checked by Academic Services Division. Any amendments requiring approval are considered by QSC. Guidance for the preparation of programme specifications is available in the Quality Manual, together with a template. Programme specifications are reviewed regularly during Teaching and Learning Review.

1.21 Some programme handbooks, but not all, have a link to the programme specification catalogue. However, students the review team met were aware of the existence of the catalogue and recognised that the programme specifications were the definitive description of their programmes.

1.22 The web catalogue of current and recent programme specifications, together with the catalogue of modules, provides a comprehensive and definitive record of each programme and qualification at the University. The programme specifications are updated annually by Schools and checked by Academic Services Division (ASD). Therefore the Expectation is met and the 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

1.23 TLB has overall responsibility for the development of policies necessary for the maintenance of quality and standards and the monitoring of their implementation. The oversight of the application of all regulations, policies and procedures in respect of quality and standards is delegated by TLB to the QSC. QSC gives final approval to proposals for new taught and research programmes.

1.24 Policies and procedures governing the approval of new taught and research programmes are set out in the 'Programme design, development and approval' section of the Quality Manual. All new programme proposals must demonstrate alignment with the UNQF, with the appropriate FHEQ descriptors and specific award characteristics where relevant. External advice and comment are required on all new programme proposals and specialist teams within the Academic Services Department (ASD) check compliance with internal and external frameworks and regulations. Before final approval, two members of QSC are responsible for ensuring that the learning outcomes of any new programme are appropriate to the level of qualification awarded. Every meeting of QSC receives a report of new programme approvals, programme modifications and closures.

1.25 The design and application of the process relating to the approval of taught programmes and research degrees would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.26 To test its effectiveness, the review team considered programme approval documentation, including the relevant section of the Quality Manual, a sample of programme approvals and the minutes of QSC. The team also viewed programme and module specifications and met teaching staff who had taken programme proposals through to approval and staff responsible for quality assurance.

1.27 Academic and professional support staff met by the review team confirmed that the programme approval process was effective in ensuring that standards are set at an appropriate level and meet the requirements of the University's qualification framework and academic regulations. Teaching staff also confirmed that appropriate guidance and support were available from the ASD on national expectations and associated reference points.

1.28 Programme and module specifications seen by the review team confirmed that programmes are informed by and meet the requirements of the FHEQ and, where relevant, PSRBs; explicit references are made to Subject Benchmark Statements. There was also confirmation, in documentation and meetings, of careful scrutiny of programme proposals by external advisers, specialist support staff and members of QSC to ensure compliance with internal and external frameworks and regulations.

1.29 Following consideration of the University's policies and procedures for the approval of programmes and supporting evidence, the review team concludes that the University has in place an effective procedure for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees and confirms that academic standards are set at an appropriate level. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.30 The University has a comprehensive regulatory framework that governs its management of assessment. This framework is contained specifically within its assessment regulations and associated policies, including those pertaining to the powers, responsibilities and operation of examination boards. Following its Institutional Audit in 2009, the University has been working towards a greater degree of harmonisation across the institution in its assessment practices: further details are provided in section B6 of this report.

1.31 The University's regulations, policies and procedures for assessment would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.32 The team reviewed a range of documentation to explore how the University's assessment processes operate in practice. In addition to the aforementioned regulations, the review team scrutinised programme and module specifications, programme approval and review records, the minutes of examination boards and external examiner reports. The team also held meetings with a range of academic and senior staff, and with students, to discuss assessment practices and their role in the assurance of academic standards.

1.33 Programme and module learning outcomes, and methods of assessment, are expected, as part of the programme development and approval processes, to be mapped to the University's Qualifications Framework, which itself corresponds to the national FHEQ. The University's programme approval process gives consideration to the appropriateness of learning outcomes and associated methods of assessment, and the alignment of both to programme content and learning and teaching activities. As part of this process, independent external advisers are asked to comment on the effectiveness of the curriculum and assessment in relation to the programme's intended learning outcomes; moreover, the University's Curriculum Services and Academic Services departments provide specialist review and verify compliance with University frameworks and programme specification regulations.

1.34 It is an expectation that module learning outcomes should reflect, and enable the achievement of, overarching programme learning outcomes through the successful completion of the programme of which they are a constituent part. The mapping of module and programme learning outcomes is a consideration in both the programme approval and TLR processes.

1.35 TLR also aims to determine, among other things, whether students are attaining the intended learning outcomes of the programme(s) under review and whether assessment enables this to be appropriately demonstrated, as well as whether learning outcomes are aligned to the relevant internal and external reference points (including the University's qualifications framework and related Subject Benchmark Statements). It is a requirement of

the process that the review panel contains at least one appropriately qualified panel member who is external to the University.

1.36 School Examination Boards are held to determine whether students have met the learning outcomes for their programmes, and they accordingly make decisions about student progression and attainment and the award of academic credit: decisions are reported to the University's Academic Services Department. The School Examinations Officer has responsibility for liaising with external examiners, the Academic Services Department and the University's Examination Office to ensure that Examination Boards are run equitably and consistently across the institution.

1.37 External examiners are appointed by the QSC with authority delegated from its Senate to provide external oversight of standards: they report annually on the appropriateness and consistency of assessment methods and processes, and whether the Examination Board they attended was conducted properly and in accordance with established procedures.

1.38 The University has a regulatory framework and associated processes for assessment in place to ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded on the basis of students' achievement of the relevant learning outcomes and in accordance with internal and national threshold standards. It makes thorough use of external expertise to confirm that learning outcomes at programme and module level are appropriate, suitably benchmarked and aligned to corresponding methods of assessment. 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 (A3.3): 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

1.39 The University uses annual monitoring and periodic Teaching and Learning Review (TLR) as mechanisms to monitor, review and maintain the academic standards of programmes. Annual monitoring, which covers all taught and research programmes, takes into account the reports of external examiners, data on progression and achievement and feedback from students. TLR, by which schools are reviewed on a six-year cycle, provides an opportunity for the University to review the academic currency of its curriculum and to ensure that academic standards are secure. Review teams are required to confirm that qualifications offered by the school under review are in line with the UNQF and that the learning outcomes of programmes match the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement.

1.40 QSC is delegated by TLB to undertake the institutional oversight of annual monitoring. Members consider individual monitoring reports and provide feedback for schools. ASD annually provides QSC with reports on the monitoring of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and QSC provides an overview of the process to TLB. The reports of TLRs and school responses are considered by TLB to provide institutional oversight of the process.

1.41 The design and application of the University's processes for the monitoring and review of programmes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.42 To assess the effectiveness of the processes, the review team considered a range of documentation, including samples of annual monitoring and TLR reports, the relevant sections of the Quality Manual and committee minutes and papers. The team also met staff, teaching and administrative, and students who had been involved with annual monitoring and TLR.

1.43 The documentation seen by the review team indicated the key role played by the Quality and Standards team within ASD in the coordination of the annual monitoring process. Academic staff seen by the team confirmed the value of the advice, support and training provided by ASD. The monitoring process is administered via two report pro forma, one for taught programmes and the other for research degree programmes, and the monitoring exercise is distributed across the academic year. Once schools have completed the relevant sections of the report, the Quality and Standards team generate feedback on student performance data and issues raised by external examiners; a final section of the report provides confirmation of achievement of UK threshold academic standards. A report on each cycle of annual monitoring is made to QSC who use individual reports and the bank of information assembled during the process to provide feedback to schools. Academic staff seen by the team confirmed that the different stages of the annual monitoring process and the different levels at which qualitative and quantitative information is used ensure that any significant issues would be detected and acted upon quickly.

1.44 The documentation seen by the review team confirmed the effectiveness of the TLR process in encouraging schools to consider the continuing currency and validity of the programmes that they offer. The Curriculum Management team from ASD provides TLR

panels with the result of an audit of the programme specifications of the school under review. Panels, which always include at least one external assessor, are required to confirm that qualifications offered by the school are in line with the UNQF and that learning outcomes of programmes have an appropriate match to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Staff and students met by the team who had been members of TLR panels appreciated the support provided by ASD and confirmed the effectiveness of the process in reviewing the curriculum and maintaining standards.

1.45 The review team concludes that appropriate processes are in place for the monitoring and periodic review of programmes which explicitly address the achievement and maintenance of academic standards. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.46 The University has clearly defined requirements for the involvement of external, independent expertise in the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards. These requirements are codified in its Quality Manual, which outlines the University's policies, procedures and responsibilities with regards to programme design, development and approval, programme monitoring and review, and external examining.

1.47 The mechanisms that the University has in place to ensure that external expertise is used appropriately in the assurance of academic standards would enable this Expectation to be met.

1.48 The review team scrutinised a range of documentation relating to the involvement of external expertise in ensuring that UK threshold academic standards are appropriately set, delivered and achieved. This included programme approval and review records, the minutes of examination boards and external examiner reports. The team additionally met staff and students to explore how embedded externality is in practice at the institution.

1.49 The Quality Manual stipulates that external guidance must be sought in the development of all new programmes, and outlines the nature of the role of an external adviser. The external adviser is required to comment on, among other things, a proposed new programme's business and market case, its validity, relevance and appropriateness in relation to relevant external reference points (such as Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ) and the effectiveness of the curriculum and of assessment methods in enabling students to meet the intended learning outcomes. Where a new programme is aimed at preparing students for a particular profession, evidence of consultation with employers and/or professional bodies must also be sought. External advisers are expected to have relevant academic credentials and authority, although industry expertise might also be sought. Candidates for the role are identified by the School concerned and recruited as needed, and although the review team found that, overall, programme approval is an appropriately robust and independent process, the University might wish to reflect upon its oversight of the appointment of external advisers.

1.50 TLR is conducted at the level of the school and requires at least one appropriately qualified panel member who is external to the University; they are nominated by the Head of School and approved by the Panel Chair, with advice from the University's Academic Services Department. Accrediting body requirements are expected to feature in TLR, via a reflection on the alignment of each relevant programme in the Programme Evaluation Document. External examiner reports and responses additionally form part of the evidence base for review.

1.51 Many of the University's programmes are accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), and the Quality Manual details the procedure for the local and institutional consideration of reports from such organisations.

1.52 External examiners are appointed to provide the University with an ongoing assurance of the standard of its programmes of study, including for academic provision at its overseas campuses. External examiners approve examination papers and samples of all assessed work, and attend examination board meetings; they are additionally asked to comment on the quality of teaching and learning on the programme to which they are appointed (as indicated by student performance), and on the aims and content of the curriculum. Heads of School are required to submit a formal response to any issues requiring action arising from their reports. The Quality Manual provides details of the criteria for the appointment of external examiners and for the termination of their contracts; additional information on criteria is provided on the University's website. The Quality Manual states that it is the responsibility of Schools to ensure that a sufficient number of external examiners are appointed. This responsibility is overseen by the University's ASD, which maintains a database of examiners.

1.53 Externality is an embedded part of the University's quality assurance processes, and is used appropriately in the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards. 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 setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

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

1.55 The University has comprehensive and transparent academic frameworks and regulations that are effective in securing academic standards across its campuses. It has in place appropriate processes for the approval, monitoring and review of taught programmes and research degrees, and for ensuring that threshold standards are met for the award of credit and for all academic qualifications. A searchable database of programme specifications provides the single source of information about programmes. Externality is an embedded part of the University's quality assurance processes and careful attention is paid to the role of external examiners in the verification of academic standards.

1.56 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 Arrangements for programme design, development and approval are explained in the Quality Manual, managed by ASD and overseen by QSC. It is a two-stage process, with the development of a business case, followed by the framing of a programme specification. Proposals can come from any campus and are initiated at school level where the curricula are designed and the submission documents drafted. After approval at school level the business case and programme specification is sent to ASD to request approval at the University level.

2.2 In preparation of the business case, schools are encouraged to seek guidance from the University's Market Intelligence Unit and a range of other professional service departments. The business case is sent to the relevant Faculty PVC or Provost for approval. The programme cannot be advertised or applications accepted until the business case is approved.

2.3 School Teaching and Learning Committees are required to approve programme specifications and external advice must be sought on how a new programme is situated against external reference points and its alignment with the level and the title of the award; a copy of the external advice is submitted to QSC with the programme specification. Following school approval, the programme specification is reviewed by the Curriculum Management and Academic Administration teams in ASD and Central Admissions for overall quality and compliance with the UNQF and the Programme Specifications Guidance and Regulations.

2.4 The final stage of programme approval lies with QSC and concerns the proposed programme specification. ASD provides assurance to QSC that the requirements of the Quality Manual are met or points out any possible conflicts. The school must assure QSC that the programme specification is aligned with the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement. Two members of QSC, one from within the relevant faculty and one from outside it, scrutinise the programme specification to resolve any conflict between the school and ASD to ensure that the learning outcomes are appropriate to the level of qualification, and to confirm that there has been adequate consultation with other affected schools.

2.5 In addition to the University-based approval process, international campuses may be required to seek further approval from local external bodies prior to, or during, the process. For programmes approved for delivery at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC), other than those subject to professional body accreditation, 'self-accreditation' - that is, confirmation to QSC that the programme is operating satisfactorily - must be undertaken before the first cohort of students completes the programme.

2.6 The Quality Manual contains guidance and regulations on the content of module specifications. All module specifications must be reviewed at school level and approved by ASD. There are published procedures for the approval of amendments to both programme and module specifications. For significant changes to programme specifications the

processes mirror those for the approval of new programme specifications. The closure of programmes is subject to the approval of QSC to ensure that the interests of current students and applicants are fully considered in the decision-making process.

2.7 The design and application of the process relating to the development and approval of new programmes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.8 The review team tested the effectiveness of the process by the consideration of programme approval documentation, including the relevant section of the Quality Manual, a sample of programme proposals and approvals and the minutes and papers of QSC. The team also met teaching staff who had taken programme proposals through to approval and staff responsible for quality assurance.

2.9 By means of the scrutiny of evidence provided and by meeting staff and students with experience of programme approval, the review team is able to confirm the effectiveness of the processes for programme design, development, approval, modification and closure.

2.10 Guidance is available at all stages to those involved in programme approval, including induction for new members of QSC. Curriculum Services provides specialist advice on programme approval in the form of training sessions and bespoke advice for more complex programmes. Staff the review team met were appreciative of the support and guidance provided by ASD.

2.11 There is evidence of wide consultation, both internal and external, during the approval process. Schools are required to ensure that the views of students are considered in the design and approval of new programmes and those views can be gathered either directly or through representatives. Schools are also required to take advice from individuals not directly involved in the delivery of the programme. At a minimum this includes consultation on, and approval of, the business case and programme specification. Advice is provided to schools on the choice of appropriate external experts. Programme specifications are posted on an internal workspace for review and comment and all new and significantly revised programmes are circulated via the Faculty Teaching Consultation Network Committee, or relevant Campus Teaching Committee, to identify interdisciplinary crossovers and potential for collaboration.

2.12 The review team heard from staff who had taken programmes through to approval and from members of QSC that there is careful scrutiny of proposals at every stage of the process and that programme proposals are improved, or can even fail, as a result.

2.13 The procedures for the development, approval and modification of programmes are clearly articulated and provide for the careful consideration of programme proposals and modifications with appropriate oversight within the committee structure. Meetings with staff and consideration of the evidence confirm that the process is consistently applied across the University. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.14 The University's Admissions Policy is published in the Quality Manual on the University's website; the University benchmarks its policies for recruitment, selection and admissions against the Quality Code and is cognisant of guidance and good practice information from bodies such as the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) network. Schools are responsible for setting entry requirements and ensuring that these are fair, transparent and accurate and fit within the University's overall policy requirements. Entry criteria are published online in programme specifications and made available to students through published and online prospectuses. The University maintains a database of minimum entry requirements for all undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

2.15 The University's Flexible Admissions Policy sets out the indicators of relative disadvantage which make an applicant eligible to be considered under the policy and in certain circumstances allows the University's admissions staff to make a non-standard offer to the applicant. On the international campuses, the standard University policy on admissions is supplemented by additional procedures adapted to local context, where appropriate and necessary. The application process at UNNC for undergraduate students follows the Chinese university admissions system.

2.16 The International Office manages a central database of international qualifications that is kept up to date to ensure consistency and the Quality Manual contains detailed information regarding minimum English language requirements.

2.17 The framework in place for the recruitment, selection and admission of students would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.18 To test the Expectation, the review team read the admissions policies and procedures, the student complaints policies and procedures, a range of programme specifications and other information provided to applicants and held meetings with staff and students. It also read documentation relating to a student concern.

2.19 Admissions policies are regularly reviewed by the University's central admissions team; any significant changes to policy are considered by University Executive Board (UEB) and/or Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) as appropriate and the Chief Marketing and Communication Officer signs off minor changes.

2.20 Those schools operating within the University's Central Decision Making (CDM) process agree criteria against which decisions are made on their behalf with atypical applications being referred to the school. Schools outside the CDM process are responsible for their own decision making; decisions may be challenged by the central admissions team if felt to be unfair or inconsistent. It is the University's intention that all schools will operate within CDM following the implementation of Project Transform. Consistency of practice is supported through a decision-making grid, guidance to staff on making admissions decisions and an admissions tutor within each school. Staff who met the team noted that this approach supported fair and consistent decision making.

2.21 Training and support are offered to staff involved in admissions and members of staff attend relevant sector groups. The central admissions team runs annual training workshops and provides online advice and guidance including examples of best practice via its website. Staff confirmed that appropriate training and support are in place.

2.22 The University makes a range of online and hard copy information available to applicants which includes the Undergraduate Prospectus, International Undergraduate Prospectus and Guide to Postgraduate Study. Applicants are supported by a series of hard copy and electronic communications and information on student fees, course-related and living costs and sources of financial support, which is available and updated regularly. The University offers a series of open days including an online virtual open day. Students who met the team commented that the application process was generally straightforward, and that the information provided was accurate and was usefully supplemented by attendance at a University open day.

2.23 The University's commitment to a diverse student body is expressed through its Access Agreement and the available data demonstrates that it is successful in facilitating access for students from less advantaged backgrounds, its intake of low-income students having increased from 17 per cent in 2004 to 27 per cent in 2014. The University supports Widening Participation through its well-established Widening Participation outreach programme, which includes a range of activities for schools and colleges and individuals such as master classes, taster days and summer schools and through its 'inreach' work which facilitates applications, admissions and entry pathways for under-represented groups.

2.24 The University has no distinct policy or procedure for complaints relating to its admissions process; applicants may complain if they are dissatisfied with the processing of their application and are referred to the student complaints policy noting that the term 'student' should be substituted by the word 'applicant', and that a Level 2 complaint should be addressed to the Deputy Director (Admissions) rather than the Governance Team. While the Student Complaints Policy is available on the University's website and applicants are directed to it as noted above, the majority of the wording of the policy remains more relevant to current students, using terms such as module tutor, personal tutor, Head of School and Faculty Dean, thereby raising the question of its appropriateness and accessibility to applicants who are not students of the University. The University has no policy or procedure relating to appeals against admissions decisions although feedback can be provided following a written request. The team **recommends** that the University develop a policy and associated procedures for handling admissions appeals and review the appropriateness and accessibility of its admissions complaints procedure.

2.25 As a result of evidence of an issue relating to a change of course offers, the review team explored the University's approach and established that the University currently has no formal policy on 'change of course' offers, although on some over-subscribed courses a mechanism is operated whereby, depending on individual circumstances, the applicant may be offered an alternative course to the one originally applied for. In line with UCAS expectations, schools have in place a policy of not proactively engaging with applicants already holding a course offer during the clearing period, although this would not preclude an applicant approaching the University. The review team concludes that a student may be disadvantaged by accepting an alternative course offer without having a full appreciation of the consequences of doing so and in particular, being unaware that the University would not contact them regarding the original course during clearing when places became available. Therefore, the team **recommends** that the University develop a policy for change of course offers and ensure that students accepting a change of course offer are fully aware of the implications of making that decision.

2.26 The University has in place an appropriate Admissions Policy benchmarked against the Quality Code which is regularly reviewed and updated. Training and support are in place for staff involved in making admissions decisions and there are a number of mechanisms in place to support fair and consistent decision making. However, there are some gaps in the governance structures and procedures relating to admissions which are addressed by the recommendations regarding admissions complaints and appeals procedures and change of course offers. The team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met but the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.27 The University's Global Strategy 2020 sets out its commitment to 'Excellence in Education and Student Life' and includes the goal of ensuring that teaching is of the highest quality and held in high esteem. The University's Teaching and Learning Strategy 2015-2020 reiterates the University's desire to be renowned both nationally and globally for the high quality of its teaching, the support for student learning and the environment in which learning takes place. Governance of teaching and learning rests with TLB chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience; the membership of TLB includes appropriate student representation. At Faculty level, Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees (FTLCs) are chaired by Faculty Directors of Teaching who are members of TLB, and UNNC and UNMC have Campus Teaching Committees (CTCs) chaired by the Vice-Provosts Teaching and Learning who are also members of TLB; TLB receives reports from FTLCs and CTCs. All schools also have teaching committees or an equivalent body which provide a forum for consultation and local decisions about teaching and teaching development in the school. This framework would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.28 To test the Expectation, the review team read the University's Global Strategy 2020, Teaching and Learning Strategy 2015-2020, documentation relating to the Transforming Teaching Programme 2013-2018 and the Peer Observation College, feedback from students as captured in external surveys, and minutes of relevant committees, and held meetings with staff and students.

2.29 The University's Transforming Teaching Programme (TTP) 2013-18 supports the achievement of the goals set out in the University's 'Excellence in Education and Student Life' sections of the Global Strategy 2020; its underpinning principle is to establish high and consistent quality in the University's educational activities in line with the goals of the strategy. The TTP is led by a senior academic member of staff and its five work strands cover student engagement, personalising student learning experiences, teaching leadership and development, digital learning and curriculum review. Developments relating to the TTP are shared in monthly 'think tank' meetings known as the Teaching and Learning Executive Group and a second meeting each month of a wider group of staff; the engagement of students is an integral part of each of the TTP's work strands. The student submission notes that the TTP is picking up and responding to issues that students have raised such as dated curricula, assessment loading and module choices available to joint honours students. There was widespread awareness among staff of the aims of the TTP and its impact on the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience. (See also section 4, paragraph 4.11.)

2.30 The minutes of TLB and FTLCs provide evidence of appropriate institutional oversight of teaching and learning activities and of upwards and downwards reporting of institutional-level priorities. Local and University fora and events allow staff to come together to discuss teaching and learning and share best practice; these include Teaching Policy Forums, seminars and Teaching and Learning conferences including the annual University Teaching conference.

2.31 Teaching and learning activities are clearly articulated in programme documentation including programme specifications and student handbooks. The team saw evidence of good and innovative practice in teaching, learning and assessment including peer mentoring, the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Nottingham Open Online Courses (NOOCs), which facilitate collaborative learning across campuses and with other universities, the use of technology in teaching and learning and e-assessment. Teaching is informed by research and some schools have centres that focus specifically on pedagogic research. The student submission notes that the quality of teaching at the University is of a high standard and that NSS and PTES outcomes generally show high satisfaction with teaching.

2.32 In addition to national external surveys such as NSS and PTES, students provide feedback on their programmes and teaching through the Student Evaluation of Modules (SEM) and Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) processes. SEM and SET outcomes are considered through the committee structure, included in the evidence for Teaching and Learning Review (TLR) and incorporated into the staff personal development and performance review process, and can help inform promotion decisions. The University 'Staff Oscars', organised by the Students' Union, is a student-led awards scheme for teaching, administrative and support staff across UNUK and UNMC and allows students to nominate staff across 14 categories, including personal tutors, supervisors, teaching and University life. In 2013 the Students' Union gained Higher Education Academy (HEA) funding to develop the outputs of the award, and produce annual reports. The student submission notes that the University Staff Oscars is a firmly established conduit for students to reward and recognise what they consider to be high-quality teaching and academic support. The University's Lord Dearing Awards acknowledge the achievements of staff in enhancing the student learning experience; both students and staff can nominate staff.

2.33 The University has appropriate mechanisms in place to support and develop its academic staff. Staff described a useful induction and ongoing mentorship process and confirmed that newly appointed lecturers are expected to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) accredited by the HEA unless they already hold an equivalent qualification. Development needs and opportunities are identified through the staff personal development and performance review process and a range of training courses and development activities are offered by the University; courses focusing on teaching and learning are provided by the University's Professional Development team. The Learning Technology section within Library, Research and Learning Resources supports academic staff in the creation and delivery of eLearning materials and holds monthly eLearning community seminars to showcase initiatives and best practice within the University.

2.34 Staff also commented positively on the University's support for staff applying for HEA Fellowships; since its introduction in 2014 there have been 49 successful applications to Senior Fellow level and nine at Principal Fellow level. More recently, in 2015, the University introduced the Nottingham Recognition Scheme (NRS), accredited by the HEA, which allows the University to assess and award Associate, Fellow or Senior Fellowship.

2.35 The University revised its criteria for promotion in 2013 to allow a teaching route to promotion as well as the more traditional research route. Since August 2015 there have been 88 promotions of academic staff, and of those, 14 were via the teaching and learning route. Staff welcomed the revised criteria for promotion which they acknowledged were clear and accessible.

2.36 Schools and departments have in place mechanisms for the observation of teaching; staff confirmed that these operate in slightly different ways. Some, for example, are annual and some bi-annual. In addition, the University operates a Peer Observation College in the UK, consisting of experienced academics, Associates, who provide professional,

independent and consistent teaching observation for colleagues who apply to the college to be observed. To date, 39 Associates from across Faculties have been trained. Similar schemes are in place in China and Malaysia. The aims of the Peer Observation College support the University's goal of ensuring that teaching is of the highest quality and held in high esteem. The College supports staff who wish to improve their teaching and helps to identify and publicise good practice. The scheme is overseen through the Peer Observation College's Academic Board and its effectiveness will be reviewed through the TTP under the strand of Teaching Leadership and Development. The review team concludes that the Peer Observation College, which makes an effective contribution to the University's strategic goal of ensuring that teaching is of the highest quality and held in high esteem, is **good practice**.

2.37 The review team concludes that the University clearly articulates and systematically reviews and enhances the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices. Hence the Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

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

2.38 The University's Global Strategy sets out its commitment to 'Excellence in Education and Student Life'. To help support the goals of its strategy the University seeks to provide a comprehensive system of student support and development and believes that well-structured, accessible support for students is an essential component in the successful academic careers of its students. The University's policy on Student Support and Development is set out in the Quality Manual.

2.39 Primary student support is delivered to students through academic staff within schools with the personal tutorial system playing a significant part. There is also a network of specialist services available to students at all campuses currently delivered by the Student Operations and Support Division; at the time of the review visit this support was under review. This framework would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.40 To test the Expectation, the review team read relevant strategy and policy documents, a range of documentation and information made available to students including a sample of student handbooks, and feedback from students as captured in external surveys, and held meetings with staff and students.

2.41 The University places a high priority on the arrival, welcome and early induction experience for students and the requirements for induction are set out in the Quality Manual. The University provides a series of bespoke welcome and induction packages for groups of students identified as having particular needs such as mature students, care leavers, international students and students who declare a disability. Students on all campuses can access a Nottingham Open Online Course (NOOC), 'Your University Journey', aimed at supporting undergraduate transition into the University, which starts at pre-arrival and continues through to early induction. Students noted that their induction experience had generally been positive and they were aware of the availability of the NOOC. While the student submission notes some concerns about the length of induction, which lasts for three days, the availability of NOOCs was viewed as a positive development.

2.42 Baseline standards for personal tutoring are set out in the Quality Manual. Most academic members of staff are expected to be personal tutors and induction and refresher training opportunities are available to staff undertaking this role. Every undergraduate student at the University is allocated a personal tutor by their school and students are expected to meet with their personal tutors at least three times a year, although students noted that this varied across schools. Taught postgraduate students (PGTs) also have access to personal tutors but as noted within the student submission, the system for PGTs is currently less well defined. Responsibility for the operation of the personal tutoring system within schools rests with the School Senior Tutor who is part of the Senior Tutors Network, convened by the University Senior Tutor. UNNC and UNMC have a Campus Senior Tutor and equivalent network and the University Senior Tutor coordinates and liaises between campuses. Schools produce and publish a statement of tutoring arrangements through student handbooks, the virtual learning environment (VLE) or school website. The personal tutoring system is currently being reviewed by the University Senior Tutor to identify best practice, develop strategies to share that practice and encourage more consistency across schools. The review team notes that this was a comprehensive review which includes surveys of students regarding their experiences of personal tutoring, a survey of Senior

Tutors in UNUK and the Campus Senior Tutors in UNNC and UNMC, and a detailed action plan with many of the actions having already been addressed.

2.43 The Student Services Centres (SSCs) form part of a wide-ranging network of student services providing academic, disability and financial support as well as access to other services such as counselling, chaplaincy and faith, careers and employability and the International Office; these services were valued by students. Similar facilities also exist at the University's international campuses and students at these campuses were complimentary about the support provided. As noted above, the delivery of central student services is being revised and in September 2016 the University is launching five newly created SSCs as part of Project Transform with the aim of providing an end-to-end student experience from registration to graduation.

2.44 Study support is offered through the Academic Support team for all students with specialist support available for those students with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties (SpLDs); one-to-one teaching sessions cover reading for academic purposes, academic writing, revision and examination strategies. Students were positive about their experiences of the support available. A wide range of study support materials are made available to all students by the Academic Support team and Library, Research and Learning Resources (LRLR). Academic development support is also provided locally by schools, many of which have 'Student Support Officer' roles in addition to the Senior Tutor role.

2.45 A comprehensive range of support and advice is provided for students with disabilities, through the Disability Support team and the Schools. The University has an accredited in-house assessment centre (UNAC) with a team of specialist assessors. Practical academic support is provided to students through the Support Worker Service composed largely of Nottingham graduates who have attended training and receive ongoing monitoring and assessment. Schools are also required to appoint a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) who meet through a network to share information and good practice. The network includes the international campuses. Schools publicise the disability support available and material produced by schools is made available in alternative formats. The student submission notes that students are generally satisfied with the disability support provided.

2.46 The University has an effective approach to the provision of resources to support student development which includes recent investment in its library facilities. Libraries, Research and Learning Resources (LRLR) provides a range of library and learning technology services and works with colleagues at UNNC and UNMC who share the same library systems and VLE. LRLR encourages feedback from students in a number of ways including through its website, student focus groups, surveys, NSS, PTES, PRES, comment/suggestion boxes and Learning Community Fora (LCFs). Recent initiatives as a result of feedback include current students being employed as Library Ambassadors at the start of each semester and the development of ten-minute tours of each of the libraries. A suite of information skills training for students is also available. A range of IT Services is provided by Information Services. Students can access IT support, advice and guidance in person in some of the University's libraries and via the IT Service Desk. Student feedback on IT provision is gained through LCFs and through the Student IT Support Tutors (SITS) scheme which employs current students to help support the IT needs of students. Students across all campuses expressed satisfaction with the resources available to them and this is also reflected in the student submission and NSS and PTES outcomes.

2.47 The University's current VLE was introduced in 2012-13; the following year a policy on the minimum threshold for engagement with the VLE for all modules was established with compliance across all schools expected by the start of the 2015-16 academic year. A comprehensive review of the content of all modules on the VLE was carried out between October 2014 and February 2015 by a group of students, supplemented by a survey of staff

and students across the University in December 2014. The review highlighted that in general there was good implementation of the VLE policy and that pockets of excellent practice existed, but it also noted the tendency for staff to use the VLE as a file repository. To address this, greater consistency across modules and enhanced use of the VLE's learning and teaching features is a component within the digital learning strand of the Transforming Teaching Programme (TTP) which also includes the deployment of dedicated Faculty Learning Technology Consultants to support these aims. Students at the international campuses particularly valued the use made by staff of the VLE, although UK students noted there was inconsistent use across modules, a view also expressed in the student submission.

2.48 The University sets out its goal of providing students with opportunities to develop skills, qualities, knowledge and experience to prepare them for high-value employment in their chosen field in the 'Excellence in Education and Student Life' core strategy within its Global Strategy 2020. The enabling strategy of 'Embedding Internationalisation in All We Do' sets out the University's goal of offering opportunities in core curriculum and the broader university experience that ensures all students experience a high-quality international education. The University sets out to achieve these goals in a number of ways; student employability is supported by a specialist Careers and Employability Team which operates through a 'hub and spoke' model.

2.49 The University offers an extensive range of paid placements to its students and its Global Strategy 2020 sets out its plans to increase the available number of placement and internship opportunities. The Nottingham Advantage Award (NAA) launched in 2008-09 at the UK campuses with subsequent rollout to the international campuses enables students to take, and gain credit for, extra-curricular modules alongside their academic studies; the Award is recognised on students' degree transcripts. The University's commitment to a strong international dimension is demonstrated through the provision of a wide range of opportunities for students to spend part of their study overseas; these range from compulsory years spent at an international partner university to overseas summer schools to Erasmus study or work placements. UK students studying for a degree which is also offered at one of the University's international campuses have the opportunity to spend a semester or a year of their degree studying at either UNMC or UNNC. Similarly, students at UNMC and UNNC have the opportunity to apply to study at another campus. Students spoke very positively about these opportunities which they believe enhance their employment prospects. The review team concludes that the University's achievement of its strategic goal to provide an extensive range of opportunities which enhance student employability is **good practice**.

2.50 The review team considers that the University has in place a strategic approach and effective procedures which enable students to develop their academic and personal potential. Consequently, the Expectation is met and the 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

2.51 The University aims to engage students as equal partners in their approach to quality assurance. The Student Engagement policy in the University Quality Manual and Student Charters define student engagement in the context of the learning environment, supporting students to engage in their studies and through effective student representation to enable the student voice to be heard in key decision-making activity.

2.52 Feedback is collected from students using national and internal student surveys, course and module evaluations (SEMs), individual and group feedback meetings, student representation on committees and involvement in cyclical review processes. The University states that involvement in the latter enables the building of an evidence base to shape discussions on quality assurance. Students complete SETs and feedback is collected through an online tool, 'Evaluate', to allow ease of access for all students to participate.

2.53 Training and support of student representatives is provided by students' representative bodies across all campuses, including the provision of development opportunities. Students' development of employability skills is also measured through the Nottingham Achievement Award module for student participation. Student representatives are elected across the University.

2.54 Students are members of School Teaching Committees and Learning Community Forums (LCFs), in addition to FTLCs. These committees are required to have student members. LCFs are tasked with ensuring student concerns about programmes and student feedback are given appropriate attention and help enable in-year responses to student feedback. LCF minutes and external examiners' reports are shared with students through the VLE.

2.55 The Students' Union represents students on the University Council, Finance Committee, Teaching and Learning Board, and Quality and Standards Committee. School Education Representatives, senior student representatives, liaise with students and attend all school LCF meetings. Student feedback from school committees is escalated to FTLCs and University-level quality and teaching and learning committees.

2.56 Students play a significant role in the annual monitoring of taught and research degree programmes. Students contribute to the reports through their own returns, supported by the Students' Union. This process was developed with the support of the Students' Union to ensure that it was student-facing and enabled the collection of feedback. The outcomes of annual monitoring are reported to the QSC. TLR considers student feedback through meetings, various survey feedback and LCFs.

2.57 The University is ensuring that students play an active role as part of the 'Project Transform' initiative, having conducted focus groups and student surveys to identify ways to enhance the student experience, testing the new University intranet, acting as advisers on a sounding board and also through Students' Union membership of the Programme Board and key working groups.

2.58 Student engagement in quality assurance is managed through annual monitoring and the TLR processes, student engagement in all levels of committees in addition to appeals and complaints and engagement with their Students' Union. Students are further

involved in meetings during teaching and learning review events. This would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.59 The team tested the Expectation through consideration of the self-evaluation document, student written submission, University Quality Manual, student charters for all campuses, Students' Union bye-laws, online web and VLE pages for quality assurance and monitoring processes, reports concerning student engagement and committee minutes. The team met the Vice-Chancellor, academic staff from all levels of the institution, undergraduate and postgraduate students from all campuses, staff involved in partnerships and support staff.

2.60 The Student Charters clearly enable students to understand the opportunities available and expectations placed on them to engage in their programmes of study. The University works closely with the Students' Union to ensure that student engagement is at the heart of the University environment. This is widely felt to be a strong aspect of the institutional ethos, with ongoing dialogue and constructive engagement leading to a rich educational experience. A wide understanding of the various different ways in which student feedback is gained was found among all levels of academic and professional staff. Students also reported that student engagement in committees and feedback processes is well operationalised. While the University is aware it has an 'enviable' relationship with its Students' Union, it is not complacent in this belief and acknowledged that efforts to engage those less eager to get involved continue to be a focus of development for the future.

2.61 The review team heard that student feedback is considered by a range of senior staff and all levels within the institution. Students were confident in being able to share their views through internal and national student surveys, in addition to knowledge of student representative structures and mechanisms. The review team was shown the significant efforts made at a strategic level with respect to the National Student Survey; however, the University recognised that engagement in postgraduate surveys is more difficult to achieve. However, feedback from these surveys was seen to feature in programme evaluation. Formal mechanisms for engaging students were also heard to coincide with informal discussion between students and academics.

2.62 The outcomes of student teaching and module evaluations form part of the evidential support for teaching and learning review, including incorporation into staff personal development and review processes, in some instances informing promotion decisions. While students spoke positively about the changes that are made, in some areas it was less easy to find out about these changes if they were not 'local'. Students in Malaysia went further, suggesting that while changes are made, representatives felt that not all of them were publicised as well as they could have been.

2.63 Student survey outcomes are also considered. Further, student survey outcomes were found to be highly scrutinised from programme through to institutional level. The student voice is present within University committees. The student submissions for teaching and learning review demonstrate the informed nature of the student voice, and provide opportunities for students to critically appraise the ways in which they are able to engage in feedback, the facilities at their disposal, research student concerns and careers development.

2.64 Student participation through the online Evaluate tool yielded a 39 per cent response rate in 2014-15, which the University considers to be high. Further pilot projects have been undertaken in each faculty during autumn 2015 in part to explore how to increase response rates, some of which have received a 44 per cent response.

2.65 Senior staff commented that the training of student representatives enabled strong engagement at programme level, which enabled an informed and open dialogue between

the University and representatives. Students and staff were all fully aware of the representational structures which operate at the University. Students acknowledged the University is receptive and responds to feedback. Staff shared that a personal connection is built between student representatives and staff, to create a working relationship to enable success throughout each academic year. Chairs of committees meet students to ensure they are aware of how the committees function, lecturers provide time during lectures for students to collect feedback, and that overall dialogue between staff and students is ongoing. This individualised approach extends to other areas of engaging students, such as taking part in senior appointment panels.

2.66 Further examples of individual engagement include using students for individual focus groups such as on Project Transform, enabling students to chair LCF meetings, engaging non-student representatives in focus groups, and related modules available to students through the NAA. Another example of this is the Students As Change Agents (SACA) project, which seeks to enable students to engage as partners in pedagogical change projects. This project enables students to be part of the change rather than just helping inform it, with projects including developing the undergraduate second year in the School of Life Sciences and introducing peer-assisted study in mathematics. Participants can access training online, and the projects are devised using a briefing template, with post-project reviews, surveys and dissemination plans, with the School of Education team monitoring their progress. A review of the pilot year 2014-15 emphasised the benefits of the programme, and the Students' Union feel it has continued to grow this academic year. In considering the efforts made by the University and the range of opportunities available, the review team found the University's embedded engagement with students as partners both collectively and as individuals, which makes a significant contribution to the enhancement of learning opportunities, to be **good practice**.

2.67 The LCFs are the main port of call for students to raise concerns, and they were generally felt to be effective across all UK and international campuses. The student membership on the forums and Learning and Teaching Committees was felt to make quality processes more visible to students. The discussions at these meetings were seen to be broad in remit, allowing students to raise issues from across their experience. The University seconded a member of the Students' Union staff team to review and report on the effectiveness of LCFs, and report back. The report generally reflected the value placed on them and broad consistency in their use. It highlighted a small number of instances where students were not elected as intended, though where elections were organised on behalf of the students, this was found to help. The University created an NAA module to award credit for participation, which has helped overcome cultural barriers to participation in this activity.

2.68 Student engagement with learning is further recognised. For instance, at the end of each academic year, an awards ceremony recognises the achievements of students who have completed the Nottingham Achievement Award.

2.69 The review team found it clear that not only have efforts been made to build on the feature of good practice of 'systems for listening and responding to the student voice' identified during the 2009 Institutional Audit, but that student engagement is fully embedded in the academic environment. Students are enabled to engage as partners in their learning and quality assurance, and high institutional value is placed on this across UK and international campuses. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met with a low level of associated risk.

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

2.70 The University has a comprehensive regulatory framework governing assessment, underpinned by its Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes. At a strategic level, assessment is complemented by the Transforming Teaching Programme (TTP); this outlines a series of enhancement objectives relating to assessment practice across the institution, including the future direction of online assessment and the development of guidelines around types and volumes of assessment.

2.71 The University's assessment policies provide clearly defined information about the operation of assessment and the conduct and responsibilities of School Examination Boards; these policies address areas such as marking and grading, e-assessment, the retention of assessed work, academic misconduct, extenuating circumstances and academic appeals. Information about the recognition of prior ('other') learning is also made available within the Admissions section of the Quality Manual. Detailed procedures for the assessment of postgraduate research students also exist. The University's regulations, policies and procedures for assessment would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.72 In addition to regulatory and strategic documentation, the review team scrutinised programme and module specifications, programme handbooks, the minutes of examination boards, external examiner reports and information relating to staff development and training in assessment. The team also held meetings with a range of academic and senior staff, and with students, to discuss the application of assessment policies.

2.73 The University's Quality Manual, available through its website, provides clear and accessible information to staff, students and external examiners on assessment policies and processes. Programme and module specifications, and programme handbooks, provide specific information on learning, teaching and assessment methods, as well as related policies for academic feedback, extenuating circumstances, reassessment and appeals. Students are introduced at induction to assessment practices and requirements, and those who met the review team spoke positively about the information provided by the University and individual programmes.

2.74 Following its Institutional Audit by QAA in 2009, the University has been working towards a greater degree of harmonisation in its assessment practices across the institution. This process has involved an extensive evaluation of existing assessment policies, and has been coordinated latterly by an Academic Progression and Awards (APAR) Working Group that was established by Teaching and Learning Board in September 2013. Harmonisation has covered a range of areas, including assessment marking criteria, academic feedback, borderline profiling criteria, standardisation of stage weighting, methods by which degrees are classified, extenuating circumstances and progression and awards regulations; individual schools nevertheless continue to have some discretion in areas such as marking criteria and moderation. Several changes to the University's undergraduate regulations were introduced for 2015-16 at the recommendation of APAR; these related specifically to compensation, the policy on 'trailing' credits and reassessment. The review team heard that these changes had followed an extensive process of consultation, including with student representatives, and

that a series of 'roadshows' managed by ASD had been successful in introducing them to staff and students across the institution. Related changes to the taught postgraduate regulations have been approved for 2016-17, and work is currently being undertaken on harmonising module credit values across the institution (one of the aims of TTP), which is expected to conclude by 2018-19.

2.75 A number of schools across the University use an e-assessment system called Rogō (which was demonstrated to the review team during the visit) for both formative and summative assessment: it can be used for setting papers, mapping questions onto learning outcomes and post-examination analysis. This interface has led to the development of an e-assessment policy which outlines the institutional expectations for training staff and external examiners in the use of the system: online and bespoke training is correspondingly available, and the staff seen by the review team spoke positively about the system's benefits.

2.76 The e-assessment system was considered to be particularly advantageous in providing swift, targeted feedback to students on their assessed work. A stated aim of the University's Global Strategy 2020 is to provide all students with regular focused feedback on their progress and attainment; an objective of TTP similarly relates to providing students with online feedback. The Quality Manual outlines the institutional policy with regard to providing students with feedback, but it is the responsibility of schools to specify the nature and extent of feedback that students can expect. Although the review team had heard that the quality and detail of feedback have received critical comment from some students in the past, those who they met spoke positively about the developmental quality of written comments on their work and the supportiveness of academic staff. The University has undertaken a series of projects around assessment, assessment literacy and feedback under the TTP, and through the SACA initiative, to respond to student concerns in these areas: further details are provided in section 4.

2.77 Comprehensive assessment and examination procedures for research students are located in the Quality Manual. These include guidelines on the criteria for the award of postgraduate research qualifications, the role and appointment of examiners and the conduct of viva voce examinations. Further details are provided under Expectation B11.

2.78 Recognition of other learning (ROL) is addressed in a University policy outlined in the Quality Manual, and is located in its broader admissions policy. The policy stipulates limitations on the amount of ROL permitted by awards, and guidance on double counting and compensation and classification. Schools are required to make decisions on individual applications for ROL, although if they are submitted prior to entry they are also processed by the Central Admissions department.

2.79 Various forums exist across the University by which academic staff can discuss and reflect upon assessment practices. These include short course programmes provided by the Professional Development team and workshops undertaken as part of the PGCHE, a qualification all newly appointed lecturers are required to undertake. Teaching and Learning seminar series and conferences also feature assessment, and a 'Talking of teaching' blog enables the sharing of best practice. For students, an open online course entitled 'Your University Journey' aims in part to develop student understanding of the nature and purpose of assessment, and has been found valuable in this regard. Staff at partner institutions are also able to access the University's professional development schemes relating to assessment processes, and faculty exchange visits similarly facilitate the sharing of good practice.

2.80 The University has an appropriate regulatory framework, and a comprehensive suite of related policies and procedures, for meeting this Expectation. Some work on

harmonising assessment practices across the institution remains to be done, but the review team was confident that this would be managed effectively. It 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

2.81 The University's policies and procedures relating to external examiners are contained within its Quality Manual; this addresses appointment criteria and processes, the responsibilities of the role, reporting requirements and the ways in which the institution uses external examiner feedback. External examiners for taught programmes are required to advise upon and confirm the suitability of assessment methods (for example, through approving draft examination scripts), endorse assessment outcomes and attend meetings of Boards of Examiners. They submit an annual report that confirms that academic standards for the award(s) to which they are appointed are appropriate, that student achievement is comparable with other UK higher education institutions and that the Examination Board was conducted in a fair and equitable manner.

2.82 The University's processes for nominating and inducting external examiners, for supporting them in the discharge of their responsibilities, and for considering their reports would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.83 In addition to the Quality Manual and associated regulatory information pertaining to assessment, the review team scrutinised external examiner nominations, reports and responses to reports; it also considered the minutes of examination boards. The team met academic and senior staff to explore the operation of the University's external examiner processes, and discussed with students (including those at the University's overseas campuses) their knowledge and experience of the ways in which external examiners assure academic standards at the institution.

2.84 It is a stated responsibility of Schools to ensure that they have adequate external examiner coverage for programmes and their constituent modules, in terms of both number and expertise. It is the duty of Heads of School to nominate external examiners for taught degrees or taught components of research degrees. For programmes that are delivered and assessed in languages other than English, external examiners are expected to have fluency in those languages. In the case of joint honours programmes, the external examiners for the constituent single honours programmes provide the requisite assurance of academic standards. A single external examiner is normally appointed for those programmes that are offered across the University's campuses, to ensure that academic standards and quality are consistent.

2.85 Appointments are approved by QSC on behalf of Senate. The University's ASD sends new examiners their appointment letters; these contain a link to a University webpage that provides an information sheet (including details about fees and expenses, access to the Quality Manual and other regulatory information, and deadlines for the submission of reports) and guidance on completing the annual report. The ASD maintains oversight of external examiner nominations, and has a database of external examiners to ensure that adequate coverage exists across the institution.

2.86 External examiners for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes are appointed on an annual basis, with a normal tenure of four years. All new appointees are invited to a University induction event, where general information about the University and its policies and regulations is followed by a school-specific introduction.

2.87 In its 2009 Institutional Audit report, the University was recommended to extend its scrutiny of external examiner reports at an institutional level, and to reflect further on how its policy of sharing reports (for example, with students) was implemented consistently. External examiner reports are submitted to a dedicated email address managed by the Academic Services Department. Once the relevant Head of School has provided a response to a report, ASD 'codes' it according to the level of concerns it raises and the adequacy or otherwise of the school response. Reports and responses are then circulated to members of the University's QSC for review, and any queries or recommendations for further action are then returned to the School via the Annual Monitoring pro forma. The Quality and Standards Team within ASD subsequently produces a summary report, for QSC, on good practice and areas of concern emerging from the overall consideration of the reports; QSC provides TLB with a synopsis of issues emerging from external examiner reports as part of its broader review of the annual monitoring process.

2.88 At a programme level, external examiner reports are discussed at LCF, which include student representation; feedback from external examiners is actively used by staff to improve the quality of provision. Student awareness of the external examiner role is low, but the University is currently piloting an initiative that has involved the circulation of reports to students on its taught programmes accompanied by explanatory information on their scope and purpose in quality assurance and improvement.

2.89 For the University's collaborative provision, the associated Memorandum of Agreement contains a section on the role and appointment of external examiners.

2.90 The Quality Manual has a separate section on the role and appointment of external examiners for the University's research degrees, and on their reports. Nominations are similarly managed by the Academic Services Department, and are submitted by the relevant Head of School and approved by Quality and Standards Committee. Heads of School have responsibility for recommendations arising from external examiner reports; issues that arise that require institutional discussion and action are reported to QSC.

2.91 The procedures employed by the University for external examining are scrupulous, consistent and enacted with appropriate institutional oversight, and the processes for considering and responding to external examiner reports are effective. 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 (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

2.92 The annual monitoring mechanism is seen by the University as both an effective means of regular 'health checks' and an opportunity for schools to reflect on performance and delivery and to introduce enhancements. Schools are required to monitor their taught programmes on an annual basis to ensure no major issues have arisen and to identify opportunities for improvement. Schools are also required to submit annual returns covering research degree programmes.

2.93 The annual monitoring process is coordinated by the Quality and Standards team in ASD. Key principles are laid out in the Quality Manual. School staff are supported by ASD and offered guidance and training. Forms completed by schools are made available to the Students' Union who facilitate feedback and reflection from student representatives. QSC is delegated by TLB to exercise institutional oversight of annual monitoring. Members use the completed annual monitoring forms, together with information on external examiner reports and quantitative data sets generated by ASD, to provide feedback to schools reflecting on the process and highlighting key issues or areas for commendation. To disseminate good practice, annual monitoring forms submitted by schools and the feedback from QSC are circulated to Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees across the University.

2.94 Annual monitoring returns are fed into TLR, the University's periodic review process, which has evolved from School Review and which has been strongly influenced by QAA's Higher Education Review process. Schools are reviewed on a six-year cycle and are required to reflect on teaching and learning activity since their last review and to show how previous recommendations have been addressed.

2.95 The Quality and Standards team in ASD manage the process. A comprehensive TLR Handbook sets out the review methodology and provides support for the school undergoing review and for the panel conducting the review. Provision is considered in its entirety and the TLR process covers UNNC and UNMC where a school operates on one or both campuses. As well as a Programme Evaluation Document, TLR panels, which are chaired by a member of TLB and contain at least one external member, receive annual monitoring reports, quantitative data sets, a programme specification audit, external examiner reports, an overview of National Student Survey and Nottingham Student Barometer results and complaints and appeals data.

2.96 Student engagement is regarded as a key element of TLR. The school is required to provide a brief Account of Student Engagement on how the school engages students in its quality assurance processes and the Students' Union facilitates the completion of a student written submission. A UKUN Students' Union officer sits on the panel and during the review visits meetings are held with students from all the campuses in which the school operates.

2.97 Following the visit, a review report is produced and schools are asked to provide responses, including an action plan. Reports and responses are reported to TLB; this provides institutional oversight of the process, allows any issue to be directed to the appropriate department or committee and, as commendations are brought to the attention of TLB, provides an opportunity to share good practice.

2.98 The policies and procedures for the monitoring and review of programmes would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.99 The review team considered a range of documentation, including relevant sections of the Quality Manual, samples of annual monitoring and TLR reports, associated material and minutes, and papers of relevant committees. The team also met staff and students involved in the annual monitoring and TLR processes.

2.100 The review team found, by scrutiny of the evidence and meetings with staff and students, that institutional oversight of annual monitoring has been strengthened since the 2009 Institutional Audit and that the process is effective in identifying and disseminating good practice in learning and teaching. Efficient management of the process by ASD ensures comprehensive and consistent operation of monitoring across schools and across the academic year. The critical assessment of the 'sometimes needlessly bureaucratic' process in the student submission is an indication of the strength of student engagement with annual monitoring at all levels. Academic staff met by the team confirmed the effective operation of annual monitoring at various levels and considered that the growing involvement of the faculties further encouraged the dissemination of good practice. The provision for QSC to bring serious issues, as well as good practice, to the attention of TLB has increased the importance of annual monitoring and strengthened institutional oversight.

2.101 Since the 2009 Institutional Audit recommended that the University should consider strengthening the evidence base used in its periodic review process, the main focus of the process has shifted to the student experience of the school's core teaching and learning activities. This evolution is signified by the new name of Teaching and Learning Review and by the management of the process by the Quality and Standards team in ASD. Student involvement in the review process has increased significantly: a student sits on the review panel; meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students are a fixed part of the schedule for review visits; and panels consider various forms of student feedback, including a student written submission. Academic staff and students met by the team confirmed the extent of the evidence considered by panels and the value of TLR in ensuring the continuing currency of a school's curriculum. The review team saw evidence that TLR was managed efficiently and was meeting its aims of assuring the quality of teaching and learning and identifying opportunities of enhancing the student experience. The review team considers the TLR process, which actively supports the effective monitoring and review of academic provision, and has a significant focus on the student learning experience and substantial student involvement, as **good practice**.

2.102 The policies and processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are clearly articulated, robust and consistently applied. They operate effectively and inform the enhancement process. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.103 The University has separate frameworks for the management of academic appeals and student complaints which are available on its website and in the Quality Manual. The policies cover current students registered at all campuses and in relation to complaints also cover recent graduates. The student complaints procedure involves a three-stage approach; students are encouraged to attempt to resolve matters informally before invoking the formal procedure and are expected to provide evidence of that attempt and details of why the outcome was not satisfactory. Rights of appeal and representation are built into the procedures which also include timescales for resolution. The academic appeals policy sets out the circumstances under which a student may make an appeal. The Academic Appeals and Academic Misconduct Committee, a sub-committee of TLB, which may review a student appeal as part of the academic appeals process, includes student representation.

2.104 Council and the Students' Union are consulted when major changes to these policies and procedures are being considered. Significant changes are approved by Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) while minor changes to the procedures are approved by the member of QSC who holds portfolio responsibility for academic appeals and student complaints.

2.105 The frameworks in place for the management of student complaints and academic appeals would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.106 To test the Expectation, the review team read the University's policies and procedures for the management of student complaints and academic appeals, a range of student handbooks and other student information, and minutes of relevant committees, and held meetings with staff and students.

2.107 The University's policies and procedures for the management of student complaints and academic appeals are currently being reviewed to ensure continued compliance with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework and to assess their effectiveness in light of other changes within the higher education environment. The draft policies seek to be more prescriptive about timescales and to encourage more transparent and comprehensive handling of the processes. At the time of the review the University had not yet finalised the revised policies and procedures which were expected to be in place for next academic year.

2.108 The University and the student submission both acknowledge that, in line with the sector, the number of academic appeals and student complaints is increasing although the latter also notes that the total number remains quite small relative to the size of the University. Data from the OIA shows that in 2014 the proportion of students who, having exhausted the University's formal internal complaints procedures, took their complaint to the OIA was higher than the average proportion of complaints brought to the OIA from comparable universities. In comparison, in 2014, the number of cases submitted by the University's students that were justified or settled through the OIA compared favourably to the sector. The University believes that early resolution is a key factor in mitigating the increase in student complaints and academic appeals and is also considering the use of external mediation where appropriate.

2.109 Students are informed of the appeals and complaints policies and procedures in a number of ways including through the Student Contract, as part of the annual registration process and in student handbooks. UNUK Students' Union Education Advisers support and advise students in relation to complaints and appeals processes. At the international campuses assistance and support is generally provided by Student Association Executive Officers at UNMC or by staff members at UNMC and UNNC. Students on all University campuses were aware of the student complaints and academic appeals policies and procedures; some students noted the emphasis on informal resolution of complaints and others commented that the information relating to academic appeals could be clarified. The student submission concludes that the procedures for complaints and appeals are working well and that the Students' Union has no concern in this regard.

2.110 Training on academic appeals and student complaints policies and procedures is available to members of staff within schools and professional services and to student representatives, and this was confirmed by staff who the team met. A guidance note is also available to staff, advising them how to approach the investigation of a complaint, and staff are required to have undergone training before carrying out complaints investigations. The University confirmed that in the lead-up to the introduction of the revised academic appeals and student complaints policies, a training programme will be rolled out to all members of staff who may become involved in complaints or appeals.

2.111 Regular reports are submitted to TLB regarding the number of academic appeals received. Statistical information is sent monthly to the QSC member with portfolio responsibility for academic appeals and student complaints, and data on complaints and appeals is made available as part of the evidence for TLR. Council also receives an annual report on the progress of matters being considered by the OIA. The reports to TLB consist primarily of data showing the number of appeals by school across both the UK and international campuses, the type of appeal and their current status; data for previous years is also included. However, while the team learned that the ASD maintains a database of complaints across the University, the University confirmed that no overarching summary report on complaints, equivalent to that produced in relation to academic appeals, is produced for consideration through the University's committee structure, and that while there is widespread sharing of trends, this is done informally. The review team concludes that this approach has the potential to restrict the University's ability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its complaints procedures and to reflect on the outcomes of those procedures for enhancement purposes. The review team **recommends** that the University strengthens the reporting and oversight of student complaints.

2.112 The University has in place separate frameworks for the management of student complaints and academic appeals which are currently being reviewed. Students are made aware of the policies and procedures in a number of ways and appropriate training is in place for staff involved in handling complaints and appeals. University oversight of academic appeals is maintained through regular reporting to TLB. However, there is no equivalent University-level reporting in relation to student complaints. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met, but due to this gap in the University's governance structure, the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.113 The University participates in a number of collaborative arrangements that are mostly articulation or progression arrangements, or dual awards, though the Collaborative Provision Register includes a small number of joint awards and off-campus delivery arrangements. The majority of these are stand-alone programmes. There are also a number of dual-award PhD programmes. The University does not currently undertake any validation or other similar activities such as franchising. There is a Partnerships Handbook that supplements the Quality Manual to guide staff in managing the University's education provision with others.

2.114 The University's International Strategy identifies the goal to 'build capacity, partnership links and excellence in research and teaching at University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus and University of Nottingham Ningbo China'. In addition to the 33,425 students in the UK, the University currently has 4,866 students at its Malaysian campus and 6,219 at its Chinese campus. The Malaysia Campus opened in Kuala Lumpur in 2000, but later moved to a new site at Semenyih, 30 km from Kuala Lumpur in 2005. It is a joint venture with Boustead Holdings Berhad and YTL Corporation. The University of Nottingham Ningbo China, a joint venture with Wanli University, opened in 2004 and moved to a purpose-built campus located in Ningbo Higher Education Park in 2005.

2.115 Despite being partnerships, the Malaysian and Chinese campuses of the University of Nottingham are not strictly collaboration in the terms defined by the current Quality Code, since Nottingham retains complete responsibility for provision of all the learning opportunities at the campus. Students receive a UK-style education, in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, systems, language and resources. All successful students at the international campuses receive standard UK degrees conferred by the University of Nottingham. Teaching and assessment is by University of Nottingham academic employees and those employed by the joint venture, subject to the sole academic direction of the University. The University's stated intention is to provide its students with the Nottingham experience in China. As an integral part of the University of Nottingham, the arrangements for assurance of standards and quality of the learning experience are the same as for programmes delivered entirely at the UK campuses, as confirmed by other sections of this report. The processes and procedures in place at the University of Nottingham, including its campuses in Malaysia and China, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.116 The Expectation was tested by consulting a wide range of documentation, including the Quality Manual and Partnerships Handbook, committee terms of reference and minutes, memoranda of agreement, and strategy papers, and by meetings with staff at all levels of the University and students studying on the off-shore campuses.

2.117 There are currently 1,286 students enrolled on collaborative programmes. The University has a strategic target to increase this number by approximately 500. The University says it will manage the increase in numbers at a 'measured and considered pace' to allow standards to be monitored and managed appropriately.

2.118 The University takes a pragmatic, low-risk approach to managing higher education with others. Its stated strategic objective is 'to use appropriate means to ensure that standards, quality and learning opportunities are equivalent for all Nottingham awards, wherever and by whatever means they are delivered'. By concentrating its collaborative provision on articulations and progression arrangements, and dual awards, the University retains close control over its provision and the award of its own certificates. This also means that these awards are covered by standard quality assurance and enhancement measures.

2.119 The Partnerships Handbook supplements the Quality Manual for collaborative taught provision, and covers all categories of collaborative provision with which the University engages, except for research awards. Collaborative research awards, of which the University has a number with other higher education institutions, industry, public and third-sector organisations, are covered by the Quality Manual. The Partnership Handbook shows how each category of award relates to the Quality Code. It is subject to annual review.

2.120 The Partnerships Handbook is supported by a set of template agreement documents that provide further guidance to staff members involved in developing different kinds of collaborative provision. The templates are used in the programme approval process which allows the University to assure itself of the academic standards of awards and to limit the risk of any long-term arrangements.

2.121 Specialist support for establishing collaborative provision is available from the International Office and Academic Services Division, and for Doctoral Collaborative Provision from Research and Graduate Services. The International Office can also provide support for the development of international teaching partnerships by assisting with the development of MoAs and providing advice on the Partnership Handbook. For collaborative doctoral provision, including doctoral training centres and partnerships, ASD, the Graduate School and Research and Graduate Services produce agreement documents to ensure that academic standards are maintained. There is also a studentship questionnaire that must be completed when considering new doctoral studentships with industrial partners.

2.122 Approval of new teaching partnerships is a three-stage process. Stage 1 covers approval of the potential partner; Stage 2 looks at the basis for the partnership and formulation and approval of the MoA; and Stage 3 involves the consideration and approval of QSC or a relevant institutional representative such as a PVC.

2.123 Initial approval of new collaborative provision is provided by the relevant Head of School(s) and, if it involves an international campus, the relevant Vice-Provost for Teaching and Learning. If certain criteria are met, for example the partner institution is one with which the University already has a current, successful teaching collaboration of a similar type, approval of the partnership will be straightforward. If not, the relevant Associate PVC will consider the proposal in consultation with the relevant Regional Group of Global Engagement Board and approval may then be granted on the basis of consideration of a Partnership Concept Paper (PCP) prepared by the International Office and the School.

2.124 Following initial approval, the proposal is considered by one of the Associate PVCs for Global Engagement. The requirement for due diligence is appropriate to the nature of the collaborative link and the nature of the required documentation varies between the different types of partnership, as specified in the Partnerships Handbook. All MoAs are then considered in a meeting of relevant academic and professional staff from the School, the International Office, Academic Services Division, Admissions and others, known as an 'MoA Summit Meeting'.

2.125 In the final stage of approval, the proposal is presented to a member of QSC, accompanied by a commentary provided by Academic Services Division, the MoA and

any supporting documentation presented for consideration by a member of QSC. Once approved, MoAs are signed by the PVC for Global Engagement, any other authorised member of UEB or, in the case of relevant postgraduate agreements, Research and Graduate Services.

2.126 The approval mechanism works well and is proportionate. Completely new agreements require high levels of scrutiny, including the preparation of a business case, while consideration of agreements that bring students onto an existing programme is less exhaustive. The decision about an appropriate level of scrutiny is made through discussions with ASD. The processes were well understood by teaching staff the review team met.

2.127 Alongside the agreement document, a Partnership Operational Document (POD) is developed for each partnership. It contains administrative considerations for the partnership and sets out shared understanding of the mechanisms by which the collaboration will operate. A repository of PODs is maintained by ASD, who monitor a schedule of the relevant processes on a monthly basis to ensure that each partnership is appropriately managed.

2.128 The maximum period of approval for all collaborative provision is reviewed regularly and currently stands at five years.

2.129 By concentrating on articulation and progression arrangements and dual-award PhDs, the University ensures that they will be subject to standard annual monitoring and TLR. There will be an additional review whenever a partnership comes up for renewal.

2.130 Students on partnership programmes receive handbooks, in exactly the same way as students on any other programme at the University. Agreement documents explicitly state that all publicity and promotional material must be approved by the University and ASD ensure that course and programme information remains current.

2.131 The certificates awarded to successful students are fully compliant with the Expectations of the Quality Code; for the majority of programmes, students receive standard University of Nottingham Certificates. The details of the certificate associated with each partnership programme are recorded in the agreement documents and the PODs.

2.132 The University offers an extensive range of placements to its students and has stated in its Global Strategy 2020 that it plans to increase the number of placement and internship opportunities. A number of these placements are overseas, either at one of the University's international campuses or at partner universities in the Universitas 21 network. Establishment of a new placement partnership is essentially the same as for any other collaborative arrangement and is described in the Quality Manual. There is a Placement Policy and standard template contracts that set out the rights and obligations of all parties. The University's policy on Recognition of Other Learning (ROL) covers placements that include credit towards a University qualification. Staff maintain contact with students while on placement. Some of the larger schemes have formal mentor schemes. For students studying abroad under Erasmus schemes, there is a dedicated team within the International Office to provide student support.

2.133 The review team concludes that the University's low-risk approach to collaborative provision and the way it carries out the management and execution of such provision mean that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.134 Postgraduate research students are central to the University's Research Strategy 2015-2020; at the time of the review there were 3,159 postgraduate research students registered at UNUK (2,780 full-time and 379 part-time), 389 at UNMC (329 full-time and 60 part-time) and 256 at UNNC (178 full-time and 78 part-time). Responsibility for the management of the standards of postgraduate research degrees and quality of the postgraduate research student experience primarily rests with schools; responsibilities of schools in this regard are set out in the Quality Manual. School Research Committees have a major role in the monitoring of research degree provision; institutional oversight is discharged through QSC.

2.135 Regulations governing the management of postgraduate research degrees are published on the University's website; procedures for progression, assessment and monitoring of postgraduate research degrees are also available on the website. Students studying on joint research awards are also subject to the University's regulations.

2.136 The Graduate School has overarching responsibility for promoting the postgraduate research culture of the University and provides a range of activities to support postgraduate research students and their supervisors, delivered through a hub and spoke model with the hub being the central Graduate School and the spokes being five Graduate Centres located across the campuses. These frameworks would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.137 To test the Expectation, the review team read regulations, policies and procedures relating to the management and award of the University's postgraduate research degrees, the minutes of relevant committees and fora, feedback from postgraduate research degree students as captured in external surveys and a sample of student handbooks, and met staff and students.

2.138 Acceptance onto research degrees is based upon both the academic ability of the applicant and the availability of a suitable supervisory team; requirements are specified in the Quality Manual. Students who met the team had found the application process to be straightforward and, with the exception of those who were already students of the University, had been interviewed as part of the process. Students noted that their induction programmes had been delivered at School, Faculty and University levels, those elements delivered at School level being particularly useful. Students also confirmed that they were provided with School Handbooks and had access to regulations through the University's website.

2.139 The Head of School, or their nominee, is responsible for overseeing supervision arrangements including the number of students an individual member of staff may supervise. Supervisory teams normally consist of a minimum of two supervisors. The criteria for selection and appointment of supervisors, the responsibilities of supervisors and the procedures for changes to supervisory teams are set out in the Quality Manual. Supervisors are required to maintain a supervision record summarising agreed actions, comments on progress, training needs and resource problems for at least six meetings a year for part-time students and 10 meetings a year for full-time students. The record is

agreed and signed by both the student and supervisor, with the student having the opportunity to add written comments. Students who met the team were familiar with these requirements.

2.140 Each school has an independent Postgraduate Student Adviser (PSA) to advise postgraduate research students and deal confidentially with their concerns about their studies or supervisory arrangements; the role and responsibilities of the PSA are set out in the Quality Manual. PSAs meet regularly to ensure consistency of approach. The student submission notes that in general students are happy with their supervisory experience; this view was reiterated by students who met the review team and is also reflected in the outcomes of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) in both 2013 and 2015. Students were aware of the support provided through the PSAs although the student submission queried the independence of the role holder being in the same school as the supervisor against whom a complaint may be made.

2.141 Appropriate arrangements are in place for the training of research supervisors. Staff confirmed that training in research supervision is part of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education which the University expects all newly appointed academic staff to undertake. Continuing professional development in research supervision is provided through peer mentoring as part of the team-based approach to supervision and through programmes and activities organised by the Graduate School.

2.142 Schools are required to provide a study environment which facilitates the successful completion of research studies undertaken by students and for part-time students studying at a distance for ensuring that the student has access to the necessary facilities and resources at their place of study. Students were satisfied with the resources available to them including library, IT and specialist facilities.

2.143 Full-time research students are subject to annual review; part-time students are subject to biennial review. During their first year of registration, the status of PhD students as doctoral candidates is probationary and they are subject to Confirmation Review by the end of that year. At the end of their second year of study, PhD students are subject to Progression Review. Students were clear about the University's requirements for progression and review, which they noted were set out in the Quality Manual and student handbooks.

2.144 Research students and early career researchers are offered a range of training and development opportunities mapped to the Researcher Development Framework (RDF). Students undertake an annual training needs analysis with their supervisory team to identify development requirements and put in place a plan to address these. The Graduate School has a team of Researcher Training and Development Managers (RTDMs), each responsible for managing a Graduate Centre and coordinating and promoting training and events tailored to the needs of particular Faculties and/or Schools. Travel and mobility grants are available to postgraduates for conference attendance, research visits and overseas fieldwork. The Postgraduate Placements Nottingham (PPN) programme provides postgraduate students with the opportunity to undertake a short-term and flexible placement within an organisation; the PPN programme was awarded the Times Higher Award for Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers in 2015. Students described a range of available training events as well as opportunities to give presentations at external conferences and internal seminars.

2.145 The University's policy regarding students who teach is set out in the Quality Manual; Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the policy are observed. Students confirmed that Professional Development offers modules on teaching

and assessment for students undertaking teaching and assessment duties and that ongoing support is also provided through schools.

2.146 Comprehensive procedures for the examination of research degrees are available on the University's website and students were aware of these processes. The process for appointment of external examiners is set out in the Quality Manual; nominations are made by schools, managed by the ASD (ASD) and signed off by QSC. The Head of School has overall responsibility for ensuring that vivas take place within three months of the submission and may attend the viva of any research student in their school as an observer unless they are the student's supervisor. Schools may also appoint an independent non-examining Chair for the viva voce examination; staff confirmed that this was mandatory in some areas but varied depending on the availability and experience of staff within schools. Recommendations from external examiners are signed off by the Head of School. The University has oversight of external examiner reports through ASD, who consider the reports and raise any issues worthy of further consideration with QSC.

2.147 The University has in place appropriate procedures for the monitoring and review of its postgraduate research provision which is undertaken through the University's standard annual monitoring and TLR processes described in more detail under Expectation B8. Schools are required to submit annual monitoring returns relating to postgraduate research programmes and the annual Quantitative Data Set considered by schools and the University as part of the process includes progression data for postgraduate research students. Postgraduate research students were involved in the annual monitoring process for the first time in 2015. Postgraduate research degrees are also included within the comprehensive and effective TLR process. An annual statistical report on research degree students is provided by the Strategy Planning and Performance division of the Registrar's Department and is considered by both the schools and University.

2.148 Students confirmed that feedback is collected in a number of ways including through representation on school-level committees; Learning Community Fora (LCFs); and the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). Students were able to give examples of action taken as a result of issues raised at the LCFs; while aware of PRES, students were not aware of the University's responses to the survey. Staff confirmed that due to low submission rates, there are no formal action plans arising out of school and University consideration of PRES data although the data is considered through the annual monitoring and TLR processes. The review team saw evidence of the detailed PRES data and its analysis made available to schools; staff were aware of the results of PRES 2015 which show that overall postgraduate research student satisfaction is high, with the survey showing lower satisfaction with the University's research culture. The team was advised that this issue is being addressed through the schools with support from the Graduate School.

2.149 Research students are able to access the standard University student complaints and academic appeals policies in the same way as all other students of the University and students were aware of how to access these policies and related procedures.

2.150 The University provides an appropriate research environment which supports secure academic standards and ensures the quality of postgraduate research student learning opportunities. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.151 In determining its judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities at the University, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low with two exceptions: there are some gaps in its governance structures and procedures relating to admissions and the team recommends that the University develop a policy for change of course offers and ensure that students accepting a change of course offer are fully aware of the implications of making that decision; also that it develop a policy and associated procedures for handling admissions appeals and review the appropriateness and accessibility of its admissions complaints procedure. There is also a recommendation in relation to strengthening the University's reporting on and oversight of student complaints.

2.152 The University has in place a set of well-developed practices and procedures to assure the quality of student learning opportunities and the team noted a number of features of good practice with regard to peer observation, the range of opportunities available to enhance student employability, the engagement with students as partners, the Teaching and Learning review process and the Transforming Teaching programme. The University is committed to ensuring that student learning opportunities are equivalent across all the campuses. There is a strong ethos of partnership and engagement between staff and students and an inclusive and vibrant academic community focused on high standards of teaching and research. The University provides a supportive environment for students to learn and succeed in their transition to the world of work.

2.153 Overall, 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 University website contains information for applicants, current students, alumni, staff, business, local community, guests and other stakeholders. Information is provided on a school-specific basis online and in printed materials, and this is managed by the Heads of School to ensure this information is accurate. The University complies with the legislative requirements for information and data protection across all campuses. A harmonised approach to meeting the needs for timeliness in responding to these requirements and internal processes such as student appeals has been devised.

3.2 Other information such as the University strategy, annual reports and financial information is also published online. University business, through the internal committee structure and related minutes, is also made available. The institution submits a Key Information Set return to HEFCE, the collection of which is managed by the Registrar's Department, which is published online.

3.3 Potential applicants are able to access information relevant to the programmes they are interested in through either an undergraduate prospectus, an international undergraduate prospectus or a 'Guide to Postgraduate Study'. Such institutional publications are designed to reflect the diversity of the student body. Information concerning fees and financial support is available online, in addition to information about anticipated living costs. Prospective students are able to attend open days, providing an opportunity to gain information and advice and further course information in person.

3.4 Prospective and current students are able to access the programme specifications catalogue online, which is supplemented with a publicly available module catalogue. Both of these catalogues relate to the year in session, and upon request the University can provide previous versions of these documents. Before and during students' arrival, they are inducted into the University, with tailored approaches taken to master's and research students.

3.5 Information, advice and guidance for students concerning abiding by regulations is produced by the Registrar's Office, and this is available throughout their programmes. Students and staff are able to access information through the University Staff and Student Portals which collects information relevant to both groups, and in addition SharePoint and Moodle are used for Malaysia and Ningbo respectively. Course and school handbooks are provided to their students, and this information is considered during periodic review.

3.6 Students are awarded a degree certificate upon completion of their programmes. Students receive a Diploma Supplement, intended to provide greater clarity for external audiences about the nature, level, content and academic standing of programmes.

3.7 The University Quality Manual is available online, and is a source for staff and students for policies and procedures for all aspects of higher education provision. This was revised online to better reflect postgraduate-specific policies. An online repository for managing programme and module records is used within Schools. The process as stated would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.8 The review team considered reports published online such as the Global Strategy and Review, student prospectuses, student handbooks, online information to applicants, student records of study, and programme and module catalogues. Information about higher education provision was also discussed with staff from all levels of the institution, undergraduate and postgraduate students.

3.9 The University's Global Strategy, Global Review and impact report documents are designed to be informative and accessible for all audiences. As the University prides itself upon its service to the local and national community, its economic impact is also shared on these grounds with the general public. Students are able to access the Key Information Set through the Unistats site. It was clarified that committee minutes are made available to the public upon receipt of a request through the formal publication scheme, further details of which are available through the public-facing University website.

3.10 Students said that information about the institution was helpful when choosing which institution to apply to. Students studying at international campuses are engaged with regularly to help establish trust and confidence as they acclimatise. The undergraduate prospectus was felt to express the academic environment students would apply to, available student support and financial information, campus information, and core information about programme requirements. This is provided in a more tailored format to international students, with particular attention given to identifying ways for students to familiarise themselves with the institution and local area. The Guide to Postgraduate Study was found to contain similar information, and also provides insight into the University's Graduate School. Students are able to access a range of information about student fees and finance, in addition to information about accessing financial support. While open days provide an opportunity for in-person exchange, applicants can access a virtual open day through a range of online information to applicants. Induction was heard to be informative and generally useful by students, including information about good academic practice. Students noted that particular attention had been paid to supporting international students.

3.11 Undergraduate students found the presentation of module and programme information through the online Module Specifications catalogues helpful, particularly with respect to comparing elective modules. The catalogue itself contains online versions of specifications, confirming the level, mode, accreditation (if applicable), aims and outcomes of programmes in addition to content and means of delivery. The calibration of programmes is conducted in alignment with the FHEQ and associated credit allocations, which is reflected in programme documentation.

3.12 Students were satisfied with their handbooks which are provided in online and printed versions, finding them helpful and reflective of their student experience. Research students reflected that online handbooks signposted key information such as regulations and the Quality Manual. The examples the team considered provided a considerable amount of information about course content, examination processes, academic integrity and available student support, and related directly to information in the online programme and Module Specification catalogues. The growth of the VLE as a repository for student-facing information has been attributed to the online provision of student handbooks.

3.13 Current students are able to access a large amount of course-related information through Moodle, which students found to be easy to use and a beneficial learning platform. Students were pleased to have all key information available in one space. Where programmes run concurrently in UK, Chinese and Malaysian campuses, the team heard that while much of the Moodle content may be the same, a process of localisation inevitably takes place to ensure it is relevant to the context of the delivery location. In this way, while programmes may have the same learning outcomes internationally, the content would differ.

Students and staff on such programmes are able access the alternative modules where appropriate.

3.14 Academic and professional staff and students in UK and international campuses were confident on where to find information about appeals and complaints, either in student handbooks or through discussing these processes with relevant individuals. Undergraduate students expressed some concerns in respect to the ease of finding information from appropriate administrative staff, but this was mitigated to an extent by the availability of printed information.

3.15 Upon completion of their courses, students are provided with a certificate containing the name of the institution, name and type of award, and level of achievement. The Diploma Supplement provides information about the award holder, marks and credits achieved, with descriptors about qualification levels, contents and results, credit, the grading scheme and the function (impacts of achievement to graduates) of the award.

3.16 Staff across the University were confident in the arrangements in place to ensure accuracy of information about student learning opportunities. Lecturers understood how to input into school-based drafting of materials, while appreciating that (in the case of programme and module specifications) there is a centrally held catalogue. In the case of collaborative and international provision, staff confirmed that marketing materials for these activities is a responsibility agreed within Memoranda of Agreement and based on significant discussion between partners. The online curriculum repository for managing module records was seen to be supported with an audit manual for reference. Students also noted that external examiner reports are shared through the VLE.

3.17 The review team concluded that there is a well-embedded devolved process for school-wide management of information, supported through central administration of information approval and monitoring. The significant majority of students the team met were happy with the quality of the information they had received, up to whatever their level of study. Staff were aware of the content of information, and assured the team that internal processes worked to enable the publication of accessible, trustworthy and fit-for-purpose information about learning opportunities. As such, this Expectation is met with a low level of risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.18 In determining its judgement on the quality of information about learning opportunities at the University, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.19 The University makes available a wide range of information about its provision. This information is checked regularly and there are robust procedures in place to ensure its accuracy. Students and staff on all three campuses access information easily and have confidence in its accuracy.

3.20 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 The University's Global Strategy 2020 articulates its overarching principles in relation to supporting, improving and enhancing the student experience. Particular areas of focus include employability and teaching quality. The strategy is underpinned by the TTP. TTP expresses institutional aims and objectives with regards to enhancing learning, teaching and assessment, as well as key performance indicators for measuring success: current and forthcoming activity is centred around student engagement, the personalisation of the student experience, curriculum review, digital learning and teaching, and leadership and development. Project Transform, an initiative aimed at expanding student services on the University's UK campus and providing online administrative support for those studying elsewhere, similarly supports its activity in this area: further details are provided under Expectation B4.

4.2 The University's strategic approach to the enhancement of student learning opportunities would enable this Expectation to be met.

4.3 In addition to the projects, programmes, policies and sub-strategies of Global Strategy 2020, the review team considered the reports of quality assurance processes and minutes of University committees. It also met senior, academic and support staff, and a wide range of students, to explore the University's enhancement ethos and the intent and impact of particular projects.

4.4 The review team concludes that three particular streams of activity embedded within TTP have made a demonstrable improvement to the quality of students' learning opportunities: namely, the engagement of students in opportunities for institutional enhancement, the support available for their transition to undergraduate and postgraduate study and the development of employability skills.

4.5 An aim of TTP is to integrate the student voice into educational change and enhancement. The SACA initiative is both an objective of and a method of delivering TTP, and it also links to objectives in Global Strategy 2020 around the proactive contribution of students to teaching and learning at the institution and the opportunity for them to gain transferable skills. SACA commenced in 2013-14, and projects now run at all campuses; it aims to facilitate groups and individual students - referred to as Change Agents - to work in partnership with staff on student-led projects which focus on enhancing teaching and learning in Schools. Themes include assessment and feedback and learning for employability, and particular projects have focused on the development of peer-assisted study support and accredited work placements. The initiative also articulates with the University's employability objectives through the development of skills such as research, team working and communication, and undertaking it can enable students to gain credit towards the NAA. A blended training package on the University's VLE supports staff and students working on projects. The University provides structural opportunities for the dissemination of SACA projects across and beyond its campuses to promote good practice and innovations in learning and teaching, particularly through an annual showcase of projects, and in meetings with staff and students it was evident to the review team that the initiative has had a positive impact across the institution. The University's embedded

engagement with students in the enhancement of their learning opportunities is noted as good practice in Section B5 of this report: SACA is emblematic of this approach.

4.6 Students' transition into higher education, and the associated support for their academic and personal development, features as one of the aims of Global Strategy 2020. A recent initiative aimed at articulating this aim is the 'Your University Journey' open online course (or NOOC); a related NOOC concerns the transition to postgraduate study. The 'Your University Journey' NOOC includes, in year one, units on getting ready to be a University of Nottingham student, becoming an independent learner, strategies for reading and writing and thinking about exams and coursework; and in year two, units on the transition to year two and understanding assessment/learning outcomes. In addition to the NOOCs, a peer mentoring scheme for students new to higher education has also been piloted, and will be extended across the institution in 2016-17: it is supported by an online training programme and associated handbook. Both the NOOCs and peer mentoring provide a strategic and coordinated approach to students' transition to University and have been positively received.

4.7 The University has observed that peer mentoring is also a mechanism for developing key skills in the mentor that will be useful when they enter employment; these might include communication and leadership skills and recognising and managing conflict. Employability is an area of significant focus for the institution, and is one of the aims of Global Strategy 2020. Specific initiatives designed to enhance students' employability skills include Postgraduate Placement Nottingham (PPN).

4.8 PPN is a scheme that aims to provide the University's postgraduate research students with the opportunity to undertake a short-term placement within a host organisation. The NAA, a cross-campus award which is recognised on students' degree transcripts, enables participating students to take extra-curricular modules in a range of areas that include skills for employability, peer mentoring and volunteer work in schools; as noted above, participation in a SACA project can also enable students to gain credits towards the NAA, an example of the University's joined-up approach to particular activities centred around improving the student experience. TTP has established performance indicators for the further development of SACA, including benchmarking the scheme against other similar skills awards.

4.9 The review team was additionally informed of a 'Transforming Placements' initiative which, in support of specific objectives within Global Strategy 2020 and TTP, aims to encourage all students to gain a work-based or placement experience while studying at the University. Sections B4 and B5 of this report provide further details on the extensive range of schemes and services that the institution has in place to support students in developing their employability skills and to advance their graduate prospects; its achievement of its strategic goal to this end is noted as good practice under Expectation B4.

4.10 The staff and students who the review team met demonstrated a common understanding of the centrality of the University's enhancement objectives to its broader strategic direction. The minutes of both Faculty Teaching and Learning Boards and their institutional equivalent demonstrate the circulation at all levels of the University's enhancement priorities. Academic staff adduced a number of examples of formal opportunities for sharing best practice that exist across the institution and which support its claim about the importance of 'bottom-up' initiatives in shaping its approach to enhancement. Many of these opportunities are embedded in routine quality assurance processes. For example, one of the stated aims of TLR is to contribute to quality enhancement at an institutional level by identifying local examples of good practice that are worthy of dissemination. Programme Evaluation Documents produced by schools for TLR invite the identification of recent enhancements to the design and operation of the University's academic provision; review reports and responses are discussed institutionally at TLB and

also made more widely available. Annual monitoring is similarly viewed by the institution as an enhancement opportunity, and a summary of good practice identified during the exercise is circulated by Quality and Standards Committee to Faculty Boards for discussion. TLR and annual monitoring are both described in greater detail in Section B8 of this report.

Other local and institutional opportunities for sharing good practice include Teaching Policy forums and Teaching and Learning Conferences, as well as the annual University Teaching Conference, and the support provided by the Peer Observation College in identifying and sharing good practice in teaching. These are addressed in Section B3 of this report.

4.11 More generally, the review team notes widespread awareness among staff of the aims and objectives of the TTP and the impact of specific projects (such as SACA) in enhancing the quality of the student experience at the University. As an institution-wide and institutionally supported programme that nevertheless brings local initiatives into its orbit and that views the engagement of students as a crucial component of its work, TTP has helped to embed a culture of continuous improvement at the University and provides a road map for the delivery of the enhancement objectives that are delineated in its Global Strategy 2020. The review team concludes that the central role of the University's Transforming Teaching Programme, which is particularly effective in enhancing the student learning experience, is **good practice**.

4.12 The University has a highly effective approach to enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities. Strategic goals have been clearly established, and both staff and students are engaged in schemes and initiatives to achieve them. Numerous opportunities also exist for sharing good practice across the institution, including through its quality assurance mechanisms. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.13 In determining its judgement on the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University, the review team considered the findings against the criteria as outlined in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.14 Consideration of initiatives such as TTP and SACA (among others) allowed the team to confirm and conclude that the University has a highly effective approach to enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities. Staff and students are aware of and engaged in the achievement of the strategic goals of these and other initiatives, and the institutional quality assurance system allows for the dissemination of good practice across the institution. Students are fully engaged as partners in the initiatives.

4.15 The review team therefore concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University is **commended**.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 The University of Nottingham was founded on a philanthropic vision, and carries this ethos through to its modern activities. The University aims to develop skilled, reflective global citizens and leaders, and recognises its current graduates are afforded many graduate opportunities.

5.2 The Careers and Employability Service is a central team providing support to students and academics to aid in the development of globally minded and work-ready graduates. The service, while aiming to provide a consistent approach, is engaged with the rest of the University through engagement at programme, school and faculty levels, across campuses, and builds on this expertise through using data on graduate destinations, labour markets and insight internally and externally. It was confirmed to the review team that this expansion throughout the University has been a key strategic focus.

5.3 The service has been grown to meet internally identified challenges to student employability such as meeting the demands of a diverse job market, a lack of careers support in school education, enabling students from lower levels of social and cultural capital to access all available opportunities, and understanding the difference between developing graduates as good employees rather than attractive applicants. While taking a localised approach, the service delivers activities centrally where students from any discipline may benefit from the opportunity. Employability Partnership Agreements are drawn up between the service and schools, detailing the needs of the school, mutually agreed key objectives and activities.

5.4 Career Development Services are operated at the University campuses abroad, with working relationships (facilitated through regular contact) allowing access to shared resources and common activities. Students and staff at campuses abroad reflected that a large number of opportunities are on offer, from job fairs to careers-focused workshops to internships and placements, and this is communicated via email. In addressing the geographical divide, the Global Labour Market Team have organised video-conference presentations to widen the availability of activities, in addition to a monthly newsletter. Alumni are also involved at international campuses in providing mentoring to current students.

5.5 The University is committed to developing programmes which prepare students for employment within their disciplines, and engage with employers to ensure that programmes maintain currency and enable suitable student development. Employers are members of the University Careers and Employability Forum in the UK, covering a range of sectors. Further, the University stays up to date in graduate recruitment trends through discussions with employers, and also a summer forum has recently been running to enable recruiters to be informed about University activity. Consultation with employers triangulates the involvement of external advisers and internal programme staff in the development of new programmes.

5.6 The University embeds employability in the curriculum through a range of teaching and assessment methods such as group work and presentations, in addition to incorporating the use of technology common to the workplace. Some examples of employability being embedded in the curriculum include the use of industry advisory boards and accreditation by professional bodies within the Faculty of Engineering, and integrated placements with specific employers within a bespoke BSc Accounting programme and the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science. The Careers and Employability Service is represented on Faculty Teaching and Learning Boards to enable employability and skills development to

inform curriculum design and assessment. For example, a professional skills module has been designed within the School of Biosciences.

5.7 Postgraduate employability is a key focus of the University's Graduate School. For research students, this is in line with national standards of researcher development, and assessed through an annual review of progress. Over 400 researcher development activities are mapped to a Researcher Development Framework. Such activities are run through Graduate Centres with input from the Careers and Employability Service where appropriate. In response to student feedback, as well as being a requirement of one funding organisation, the University began offering researchers the opportunity to present to 'non-cognate' students to develop their ability to lecture to those less familiar with their topics.

5.8 Postgraduates are able to access placement opportunities during their studies to aid in their development and also enable students to gain experience and highlight to employers the benefits of employing postgraduates. The Postgraduate Placement Nottingham scheme enables students to work in small and medium-sized enterprises for up to 200 hours, and is supported through a postgraduate placements team who deal with applications and managing the placement relationships. The scheme was recognised by the Times Higher Awards for its innovation and developmental approach. Outputs of this scheme have included researchers creating reports, strategies or action plans, developing websites, conducting market research and improving processes.

5.9 Placements provide students the opportunity to contextualise and apply their learning in work-based environments. In addition to providing clinical placements, the University is seeking to extend the opportunity to undertake placements to all undergraduate students. This initiative further seeks to focus on students' out-of-classroom experience and build on existing strengths and transferable best practice in placement provision. Ongoing developments as part of the aforementioned 'Project Transform' are seeking to make it easier to manage and monitor the placement process, and also enable greater discussion and communities of practice for the University's placement activity.

5.10 A fund is available to schools to help develop new employability activities, which has resulted in activities such as networking events, external developing placement modules and looking into further internships. Entrepreneurship is built into every undergraduate programme within the first year, categorised as skills, understanding and approaches, and the application of these in a range of contexts. Students are supported to undertake paid employment through an in-house branch of Unitemps which provides a wide range of opportunities.

5.11 The University has been running the NAA since 2008-09. It is overseen by a small group of stakeholders. The Award is intended to enable students and the institution to think outside the classroom and extend students' opportunities to develop themselves beyond the curriculum and also in areas that the curriculum would not ordinarily cover. It has been extended to students at all levels and campuses over the following years, with some 3,000 UK-based students having completed the award across an offering of over 200 modules. Students reflected positively on their ability to demonstrate their achievements beyond their programmes, and felt that they were more employable as a result of completing the award. A reflective approach has been taken to the Award; a recent review shared recommendations to develop the scheme in the future, while also highlighting praise from employers and students.

5.12 An online platform provides mentoring opportunities to students to engage with alumni who are following careers current students may be interested in. Alumni are further engaged through advertising job opportunities for graduates, and also through events around the UK to help students in applying for jobs.

5.13 The University benchmarks its ongoing employability activity through the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey, graduate market information, building on the knowledge-base within the University's mission group and engagement in national initiatives such as a recent employability in the curriculum project coordinated by the Higher Education Academy. Achievement in national awards is further used to benchmark activity.

5.14 The review team found that University is clearly committed to enhancing students' prospects and developing alumni who excel in their own fields, in addition to supporting current students in their development. The importance of employability is not only strategised, but fully embedded in the educational approach taken from a senior level right through to students within programmes. For students in particular, the efforts taken by the University to contribute to employability and graduate success are invaluable.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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

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