



Higher Education Review of Wakefield College

June 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 Wakefield College. The review took place from 7 to 9 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Polly Skinner
- Mrs Catherine Symonds
- Dr James Freeman (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Wakefield College 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 Wakefield College 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 Wakefield College

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

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

Good practice

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

- The extensive professional development for academic and support staff, which enhances their contribution to students' learning opportunities (Expectation B3).
- The involvement of employers and students in the development of significant projects that contribute to the Higher Education Strategy (Expectation B4).
- The actions taken to enhance students' learning opportunities through the alignment of programmes to strategic local and regional employment needs (Enhancement).
- The widely embedded strategic approach to activities that enhance current and potential students' employability (Enhancement).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Wakefield College.

By September 2016:

- devise and implement a robust process for the design, development and approval of Higher National programmes (Expectation B1)
- ensure that the models of delivery for Higher National programmes meet the requirements in the specifications of the awarding organisation (Expectation B1)
- implement a policy and processes to ensure consistent decision making in admissions by portfolio or project (Expectation B2).

By November 2016:

- produce contextualised definitive records for Higher National programmes to comply with the requirements of the awarding organisation and to ensure consistency across the provision (Expectation A2.2).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The actions taken to implement a process of internal periodic review, and its use to address an area of particular concern (Expectation B8).
- The actions taken to audit the quality and completeness of information relating to higher education programmes (Expectation C).

Theme: Student Employability

Wakefield College aims to enhance student employability opportunities and to respond to identified skills gaps in the area. The College sees employability as being of strategic importance to its curriculum planning. All of the College's foundation degrees have specific modules with a focus on employability. The College has strong relationships with employers, who are involved in programmes in a number of ways. Employers provide placements on some programmes, a wide range of other work-based learning opportunities on other programmes, opportunities for students to undertake live projects, and guest speakers, and attend open days. The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey shows a good upward trend in employability; in 2013-14, 97 per cent of students had progressed into employment or further study. The College has a clear strategy and effective practices for developing employability across all aspects of its higher education provision.

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

About Wakefield College

Wakefield College (the College) is a general further education college, which is based in West Yorkshire and sits within the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Higher education provision is currently offered at the city centre campus, the Castleford campus and also at the Thornes Park campus. The College's mission statement is 'Transforming lives through learning...by enabling young people, adults and employers to fulfil their potential'.

In 2014-15 the College had 542 students studying on higher education programmes, of which 257 were registered full-time and 285 part-time. The College currently offers foundation degree and top-up degree provision with three awarding bodies, and Higher Nationals awarded by Pearson.

The last QAA review at the College was the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) in November 2011. There have been a number of significant changes since the IQER. The governors approved (in 2013) a new Higher Education Strategy, which included ambitious growth in student numbers. A new senior management structure for the College (the Principalship) was introduced in January 2012. The College has seen student numbers on full-time higher education programmes increase by more than 50 per cent over the last two years to around 310 in 2015-16. In 2013 the College opened the Waterton Building (formerly the Wakefield Museum) as a Centre for Performing Arts. This site offers studio, rehearsal and performance spaces for higher education as well as further education students. In 2014 the College started to offer its sports higher education provision within the former Lightwaves Leisure Centre in the city centre. Also in 2014 specific higher education accommodation was developed at the city centre campus and designated the University Centre.

At the time of the IQER, the College's higher education programmes were validated by Leeds Beckett University (formerly Leeds Metropolitan University), but as a result of the University's decision to reduce its partnerships and validated provision the partnership was terminated. The College entered into a new partnership with Teesside University during the academic year 2013-14, with new validated provision commencing in September 2015. Exit from Leeds Beckett University is scheduled to conclude during 2015-16 with the completion of final part-time cohorts; however, all students will be offered appropriate opportunities to complete their programmes of study prior to the exit being fully concluded. In February 2016 the College was notified that Teesside University had made a strategic decision to end the partnership with the College, although it was agreed that the College could recruit as normal to its programmes for 2016-17.

At the time of the review visit the College was in discussions with Leeds Beckett University regarding potential new validation arrangements. Validation events were scheduled in November 2016 and March 2017, with a view to a 2017 start for the new arrangements. The College was also in discussions with another awarding body regarding validation of some programmes and it is envisaged that validation events will take place during the 2016-17 academic year ready for the first cohorts to enrol in September 2017.

In recognition of the need for a university centre in Wakefield (the largest city in the UK without its own university), the College has worked with the local authority and local employers on its bid to bring an Advanced Skills and Innovation Centre (ASIC) to the city, with the aim of increasing participation in higher education in the district and accelerate the rate at which the higher level skills gap can be addressed.

The College faces a number of challenges. Wakefield district remains an area of low participation in higher education and so one of the key challenges for the College is to encourage and then maintain growth of its higher education numbers by working with those who are least likely to participate. Wakefield is identified as a city with a low percentage of higher level qualifications, and HEFCE data identifies Wakefield as being a 'cold spot' for participation in higher education. The College is committed to a range of activities to widen access and promote student success, for example the inclusion of scholarships and bursaries in the College's approved Access Agreements for 2015-16 and 2016-17 is one of the key steps the College is taking in order to support students from the lowest participation wards in the district.

Wakefield Council has recognised that securing a university presence in Wakefield would help to reduce its deficit in high-level skills and that a visible university presence would support progress towards the goals of raising aspirations and create a learning culture. Developing a University Centre at the College is a key priority for both the Council and the College, and a key challenge for the College will be to ensure that the new Centre helps to address the high-level skills needs in the district. The College aims to achieve this by continuing to work closely with employers to identify local needs, but also, crucially, to design a curriculum in partnership with local industry. The College's successful bid for Skills Capital Funding and the establishment of an employer liaison group to support planning for the new University Centre are key steps to help address this challenge.

Other current challenges include funding and resources, and the Local Area Review process. The further education sector continues to be subject to the significant financial constraints experienced in recent years. The College has experienced reductions in core funding but has managed to successfully maintain its higher education provision and to increase student numbers. The College is part of the West Yorkshire Area Review. At present, both the recommendations from the review and the impact on the College's higher education provision are unknown.

Following the 2011 IQER, there were two advisable and three desirable recommendations. An action plan was produced and regularly monitored. In the intervening period there have been significant changes in the College's higher education structures and its awarding bodies. All of the recommendations have been addressed either through completing the actions originally indicated in the action plan or, where applicable (because of the significant changes), alternative actions have been completed to address recommendations.

Explanation of the findings about Wakefield College

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 maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College does not have degree awarding powers. The awarding bodies for the College's programmes are Teesside University, Leeds Beckett University and the University of Huddersfield. The College also delivers Higher National qualifications, which are awarded by Pearson. The responsibility for ensuring that the provision meets the requirements of the FHEQ, qualification characteristics and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements lies with the awarding bodies and organisation and is confirmed, in all cases, as part of the programme approval processes.

1.2 Teesside University is currently the awarding body for the majority of the College's higher education provision. This provision includes a range of foundation degrees and top-up programmes. The College staff worked closely with Teesside's link tutors during the development of the validated programmes. This activity was supported by the comprehensive guidance provided by the University, and College staff were involved at all stages of development and in the internal College approval process. Alignment with the FHEQ was integral to this process in order to ensure that qualifications were at the appropriate level; relevant Subject Benchmark Statements were also taken into account.

1.3 The two programmes currently delivered in association with Leeds Beckett University will close shortly as the College exits its previous validating partnership with the University. All programmes currently and previously offered through validation with this

university were subject to the appropriate checks on alignment with external reference points in line with Leeds Beckett University's procedures and regulations.

1.4 The provision with the University of Huddersfield consists of franchised 'top-up' and teacher education programmes offered as part of a Consortium of Colleges. This arrangement requires the Colleges to deliver a prescribed curriculum, which is identical to that delivered by other members of the Consortium, although College staff make some contribution to the design and modification of the programmes. The University takes responsibility for ensuring alignment with all relevant reference points.

1.5 Pearson is responsible for the remainder of Wakefield College provision. This provision is selected from Pearson 'off the shelf' Higher National programmes. The College is not therefore involved in any aspect of the development of this provision and Pearson is responsible for the setting of academic standards.

1.6 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

1.7 The review team was provided with extensive evidence in the form of programme approval documentation and programme specifications. While the awarding bodies have the overall responsibility for this Expectation the review team found that College staff are clearly involved in the process; this was demonstrated in their responses during the meetings, by the positive comments made by externals involved in programme approvals and by external examiners in their reports on the provision.

1.8 The programme approval process for all programmes associated with the awarding bodies meets the Expectation in full. College staff were involved with the programme approval processes associated with university provision and hence uses reference points during the delivery of the provision. The Pearson provision is 'off the shelf' and College staff are not involved in the approval of these programmes, other than in the selection of modules from those available.

1.9 A new system of business planning for new higher education programmes has been introduced, which requires staff to demonstrate how they have engaged with relevant reference points as part of this process.

1.10 The process appears to be robust and working well. Staff from the College are involved in programme development, where appropriate, and with programme approval for all university-linked provision. Staff demonstrated engagement with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The College has a higher education repository that provides effective access to all relevant documents for programme staff. A programme of compulsory continuing professional development (CPD) events is in place to ensure all staff are engaged with relevant reference points.

1.11 The awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for the maintenance of the academic standards of their awards, and the College's compliance with their approval processes ensures that academic standards are set and maintained at appropriate levels. The processes for the development and approval of programmes are robust. The uncertainty caused by the planned withdrawal by Teesside University as an awarding body could increase the level of risk for the future. However, plans are well advanced with another awarding body regarding much of the provision currently with Teesside University.

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

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.13 The degree-awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for the academic frameworks and regulations for all College provision and as a consequence responsibilities in this area lie in the effective delivery of the frameworks designed by others. In order to fulfil this responsibility the College has defined governance arrangements for higher education. The College's committee and staffing structure provide the framework for internal academic governance responsibilities.

1.14 As a consequence of the extent and complexity of the College's higher education provision, a range of mechanisms are in place to ensure that staff at the College are familiar with the assessment regulations associated with the provision. Partners communicate changes either via email or SharePoint, or in meetings. The College provides opportunities for staff to be informed of relevant assessment board governance issues, including any changes to assessment regulations, via training sessions and annual updates, with mandatory attendance by College staff when required. The College Higher Education Assessment Policy provides detail of the required practices relating to assessment boards in order to ensure the maintenance of sound academic practices; where appropriate, the College maps its practices to those of its partners.

1.15 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

1.16 The team considers the mechanisms in place to secure academic standards are secure. The arrangement with Teesside University requires an annual face-to-face mapping exercise of the University's regulations with internal College guidance to ensure adherence to the regulations and consistency in their implementation, as well as providing a mechanism for the provision of any updates. In addition, holding pre-boards of assessment at the College provides a further mechanism to ensure programme staff are informed of any regulatory changes. A member of staff from the University attends the assessment boards.

1.17 Leeds Beckett University provides information on regulations via the Academic Services (Collaborative Provision) Department. As the College currently has very limited provision with this University and there were no changes to the regulations this year, the annual update took the form of an informal meeting between the College and the University. Annual board of examiner training takes place in order to ensure staff are fully conversant with the rules and regulations governing the award of credit and qualification by Leeds Beckett University.

1.18 The University of Huddersfield provision is delivered as a franchise arrangement and assessment boards do not take place at the College. In addition, no correspondence or transcripts are issued by the College. A member of College staff, as well as the relevant external examiner, must be present at the course assessment board held by the University for any award of credit to take place.

1.19 Pearson Edexcel assessment boards are held according to the Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment (levels 4 to 7). The College has developed a Higher National Assessment Board Procedure to facilitate this process, as required by Pearson. This is scheduled to be updated shortly to ensure greater consistency of approach across all provision.

1.20 The self-evaluation document details the various arrangements in place to ensure that staff within the College have the relevant information to secure academic standards. Information on the governance arrangements at the College, and details of the mechanisms for ensuring that College staff have the relevant information, provided evidence of how the College meets the Expectation.

1.21 The process is effective. The Higher Education Assessment Policy articulates the management arrangements associated with all aspects of assessment. This policy has been rewritten for greater clarity on practice relating to academic standards, including moderation and assessment design. It applies to all provision except that delivered in association with the University of Huddersfield, which takes responsibility for all aspects of academic governance (including assessment) for its programmes. The Higher Education Assessment Policy has been mapped to University of Teesside requirements and while it states that the higher education procedures take precedence, it is a useful mechanism for ensuring consistency in approach to this aspect of academic governance.

1.22 There are comprehensive and effective mechanisms in place for dissemination of information relating to assessment within the College. Further evidence of the effectiveness of the approach to securing academic standards is provided in the annual overview reports, annual programme reports and external examiner reports (and responses thereto). The Higher Education Quality and Standards Group (HEQSG) and Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Group (HETLEG) minutes contain reference to these reports, demonstrating oversight of this activity.

1.23 The degree-awarding bodies have comprehensive frameworks and regulations in place. The evidence indicates that the relationship between the College and the awarding bodies is effective in ensuring that the College has the necessary information to ensure appropriate governance arrangements to secure academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.24 Procedures for producing and maintaining definitive programme information vary according to the requirements of each programme's awarding body or organisation. For foundation degrees, programme specifications are produced during validation and subsequently held in accordance with the relevant degree-awarding body regulations. For example, College staff are able to access the extranet used by Teesside University to hold programme specifications. To mitigate any access issues, copies of the programme specifications are also held on the higher education SharePoint site, and the Director of Higher Education and College Higher Education Office hold local hard copies. Any modifications result in both the awarding body and the College's versions being updated. The Higher Education Manager, under the lead of the Director of Higher Education, ensures that no modification takes place to a validated programme without the completion of the appropriate approval process, and annual programme review templates require that staff report any changes made to the specifications. From 2015-16 the College intends to adopt a tracking document to keep an accurate centralised record relating to programme amendments in process or approved. Degree-awarding body quality assurance processes, such as visits from link tutors, further ensure that programmes are delivered to the specifications.

1.25 The Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment and Higher National programme specifications require colleges to produce contextualised versions of the Higher National programme specifications, with a separate specification for each Higher National award. After programme teams select units from those listed in Pearson's national specification, 'this selection then becomes the definitive programme for delivery' and is stored and updated as above. There is currently a lack of a detailed programme approval process for Higher National programmes (see Expectation B1), and the variability of Higher National programme specifications suggests a lack of clarity about the point at which a contextualised programme specification should be created.

1.26 Despite this potential weakness the review team considered that the processes for managing definitive programme information more broadly would allow the Expectation to be met. The team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

1.27 The quality assurance procedures of the awarding bodies and organisation confirm that programmes are delivered in accordance with the programme specifications. Staff at all levels of the College are aware of the need to carefully control modifications to programme information and, with the exceptions discussed below, students can access programme specifications via their handbooks.

1.28 However, the review team identified varying practice between the College's Higher National programmes. Some Higher National programmes have good quality contextualised programme specifications. The specifications for the Higher National Diploma (HND) Performing Arts and HND Music, for example, include course aims, learning outcomes,

and teaching and assessment method statements. They also refer to FHEQ levels, publication dates, and revision dates where appropriate. Other programmes, such as the HND Public Services, provide similar information via handbooks. However, for Higher National Certificate (HNC) Business and HNC/D Engineering neither the programme handbook nor the 'unit lists' provided meet Pearson's requirements to produce contextualised programme specifications. For example, rather than articulating the programme-level learning outcomes, the HNC Engineering handbook merely refers readers to 'as detailed in the unit descriptors'. Similarly, although the course handbook for HNC/D Business contains more definitive programme information, it cannot function as a programme specification because it mixes references to both qualifications in a single document, even though the programmes are offered separately. The review team **recommends** that the College produce contextualised definitive records for Higher National programmes to comply with the requirements of the awarding organisation and to ensure consistency across the provision.

1.29 For the programmes delivered in association with awarding bodies, the documentation provides an appropriate reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme. However, the documentation relating to Higher National programmes is inconsistent across the provision and in some cases does not meet the requirements of the awarding organisation or provide sufficiently detailed information as a reference point for staff and students. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as the recommendation relates to an area of weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance arrangements relating to quality assurance, in specific areas of the provision.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

1.30 All programmes are fully compliant with the academic frameworks and regulations as agreed with the degree-awarding bodies and Pearson. For the most recent approvals for Teesside University, the internal College approval event was attended by the degree-awarding body link tutor, who formally checked both academic and threshold academic statements. Any changes arising from the approval process become conditions of approval, and revised definitive documentation is submitted within a set deadline. The University of Huddersfield assures the compliance and alignment of the franchised provision offered by the College. Higher National programmes are 'off the shelf' and Pearson assures threshold academic standards. The College's Higher Education Manager oversees the development of the curricula, under the lead of the Director of Higher Education, to ensure consistency and compliance of practice across the approvals process.

1.31 The Higher Education Strategy indicates the preferred criteria for the development of new programmes, the development of which is informed by current further and higher education students, employers and labour market intelligence. Employers, as consultants, provide invaluable support in decision making about the type of programme, the level of delivery and required skills set. Internal College processes for auditing curriculum development proposals and validation documentation provide assurance that threshold academic standards, as well as degree-awarding body academic standards, are met and maintained.

1.32 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation (including the Higher Education Strategy, the awarding bodies' validation cycles, the calendar, programme specification template, and documentation relating to the internal College approval process). The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

1.33 Since 2014 there have been a large number of degree programmes successfully validated or revalidated by Teesside University. This process effectively tested the College's internal processes for the design and approval of new degree programmes. It has also served to inform and reinforce the knowledge and understanding of UK threshold standards and the awarding bodies' academic frameworks and regulations.

1.34 The current College internal process includes a critical reading panel (comprising the programme team, a critical friend from outside the team and the link tutor from the degree-awarding body) which examines all modules and queries and challenges assessment strategies. Employers are also invited to attend the panel meetings, and some are involved in the curriculum design process.

1.35 Higher National programmes do not yet follow this same process but the College recognises the need to use a similar process and has plans to do so when there are changes in the Pearson specifications. There is now a revised process for initial approval of new programmes, which includes provision of a business case and a statement of intent for

the development of new awards. In the transfer to a new degree-awarding body the College has participated in an institutional recognition event and later this year a validation process for some foundation degrees will take place.

1.36 The College's participation in the approval processes of its awarding bodies, and the operation of its own internal approval processes, ensures that academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards, and are in accordance with the academic frameworks and regulations of the awarding bodies and organisation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.37 The award of qualifications and credit takes place following formal assessment/examination boards. The University of Huddersfield centre assessment boards are held at the University, and administered by University staff who issue all documentation. For Leeds Beckett University programmes, University staff usually chair the assessment boards, with the College providing the venue and administrative support. The arrangements with the University of Teesside have recently changed and a revised memorandum of agreement between Teesside University and the College has been issued; for 2015-16 College staff trained by the University continue to chair assessment, progression and awards boards. In future, University staff may chair these boards and this, in the context of the degree-awarding bodies' regulatory framework, is to demonstrate the University's robust oversight of these processes.

1.38 The BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment provides guidance on academic governance responsibilities and the operation of assessment boards. All internal College boards for Pearson provision use an internal set of regulations (as required by Pearson), which are aligned with the Centre Guide to Assessment.

1.39 External examiners attend all degree assessment boards. While Pearson subject verifiers are invited to attend the Higher National boards, they ratify assessment decisions at the time of their visit, recording these on their annual College visit reports. Programme leaders' roles and responsibilities for assessment boards are laid out in the programme leaders' handbook.

1.40 As a requirement since 2014-15, the College has held pre-boards for all degree programmes, during which module tutors formally affirm the accuracy of the grades presented. Pre-boards are also held around February for those modules where grades are not being formally approved until summer. This occurs in order to ensure that at-risk students can be identified at an early stage.

1.41 No formal pre-boards are held for the Higher National provision at the present time, although the College indicated to the review team that this may change as part of the forthcoming review of the assessment board regulations. Internal verifiers meet to standardise and consolidate grades.

1.42 The College's Higher Education Assessment Policy has been mapped to Teesside University standards. It is not relevant for the franchise provision as the University of Huddersfield sets its standards. The policy includes specific appendices/guidance on internal responsibilities, assessment design, the need for appropriate and timely feedback, academic misconduct, assessment procedures, marking and moderation, progression and awards, and examination committees and boards. A representative of Teesside University attends the HEQSG.

1.43 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including: College Higher National board procedures; the Higher Education Assessment Policy; minutes of assessment boards; and the terms of reference for the HEQSG. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

1.44 The review team held discussions with staff (including a representative of one of the awarding bodies) to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the processes of the degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisation; to confirm that the achievement of relevant learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment; and to confirm that both UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the awarding bodies and organisation have been satisfied. Students were asked about the assessment process in relation to their achievement of the learning outcomes.

1.45 The College operates within the procedures and regulations issued by the degree-awarding bodies and organisation regarding the assessment boards. The College is currently in the process of improving its own internal regulations, procedures and processes for the Higher National provision for the operation of assessment boards. These are aligned with the Pearson requirements in the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment.

1.46 The early identification of at-risk students at assessment pre-boards enables identification of any issues and for timely intervention strategies to be put in place to maximise student potential at the end of their programmes.

1.47 The College's participation in the assessment board processes of its awarding bodies, and the operation of its assessment boards for Pearson programmes, ensures that credit is awarded only where relevant learning outcomes have been demonstrated through assessment, and where both UK threshold standards, and the standards of the awarding bodies and organisation, have been satisfied. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.48 Annual monitoring reports are produced for all programmes; in the case of those delivered with awarding bodies these are submitted by a deadline set by the awarding body. The arrangements for the franchised provision with the University of Huddersfield are different in that the University co-writes the annual report with the College programme leader. Although not a Pearson requirement, Higher National programme teams also complete an annual programme review using a template that mirrors the Teesside University format.

1.49 Leeds Beckett University's collaborative delivery coordinator conducts annual visits to the College to confirm standards by reviewing learning and physical resources, staffing, student feedback, external examiner reports, the day-to-day programme operation, paperwork (for example module handbooks), recruitment and the course level report for annual review. The annual Quality Enhancement Visits carried out by the relevant Teesside University link tutor ensure that staff are delivering the programme in accordance with the definitive documentation.

1.50 Within the lifespan of Teesside University programmes, an interim review can take place to focus on specific aspects, such as the integration of work-related learning, of any programme. There is currently one programme undergoing this process. Externality, during the periodic review process of programmes delivered at the College conducted by Teesside University, is provided by employer practitioners.

1.51 In the future as they develop, internal College periodic reviews will ensure a formal periodic review of Higher National provision.

1.52 The College employs a range of documentation to support and inform the monitoring and review processes. This includes end-of-module questionnaires and analysis, data reports, response to external examiner reports, minutes of Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) meetings, minutes of annual programme review meetings, internal student survey results, and departmental reviews.

1.53 The HEQSG has strategic oversight of the overview reports deriving from external examiners and Quality Enhancement Visits, which would highlight concerns if any had been raised around standards.

1.54 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including quality enhancement reports, degree-awarding body annual reports, College processes for monitoring and reviewing Higher National programmes, module evaluation reports, student feedback, and programme reports. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

1.55 The annual programme reviews, combined with external examiner/subject verifier reports for all degree and Higher National programmes, enable the degree-awarding partners to confirm that UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by them are being maintained.

1.56 College senior management makes concerted efforts to work towards a consistent approach in the format of annual review reports so that all programme-level information is readily accessible in a transparent form for all stakeholders.

1.57 Data examined by the review team showed comprehensive and readily accessible programme information that includes, wherever possible (dependent on how long programmes have been in operation), the past three years' achievement, retention and success rate data, attendance, results of the internal student survey data, and summarised cross-College concerns.

1.58 The College has in place sound and effective processes of programme monitoring and review that address the achievement of threshold academic standards and those required by the awarding bodies and organisation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.59 The awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for ensuring the use of external and independent expertise during programme development and approval, and during assessment. They provide the policies and regulations governing the design and approval of programmes, modules and qualifications; there are varying degrees of input into these processes from College staff (see Expectation A1).

1.60 External examiners/standards verifiers are approved by the awarding bodies and organisation and, as well as providing external assurance for the maintenance of standards, are expected to provide a key contact for the programme teams during the delivery of the programmes, as well as provide annual reports. The process for the appointment of external examiners depends on the policy and practice of the awarding partner. The College nominates external examiners for its Teesside University and Leeds Beckett University provision. Choices are then approved by the relevant body that employs the external examiner. The University of Huddersfield appoints the external examiners for the programmes delivered at the College. For Higher National programmes the Quality and Learning Improvement Manager is the registered quality nominee and key contact for communication with the external examiner appointed by Pearson.

1.61 The programmes delivered by the College do not involve the formal involvement of any professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. However, use is made of a range of external guidance in order to better inform the development and delivery of provision.

1.62 The College also takes advantage of independent expertise provided as a consequence of its Employer Engagement Strategy. The College's Strategic Plan 2015-18 has as a strategic objective to 'Be the major contributor to meeting the skills needs identified by the Wakefield District's employers'. As a consequence it involves employers in discussions about the nature of the provision and during the development and delivery of the programmes.

1.63 The new Business Development Plan requires programme teams to advise how externality has been used to develop proposals. This should enable the use of external and independent expertise from the outset of any new development.

1.64 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

1.65 The extent of involvement of College staff with these processes varies. The curriculum development process with Teesside University requires the programme development team to detail the extent of external engagement. The University allocates an academic link tutor to provide guidance to ensure that academic standards are appropriately

interpreted and aligned to the FHEQ. Employers are formally engaged in the development of the curriculum and are invited to the internal College approval panel to provide an industry perspective on the programme and ensure its relevance to the sector.

1.66 Awarding partners and programme teams use documentation, research and guidance produced by sector bodies, such as the Creative and Cultural Skills Arts Council, when developing programmes, and also to inform session content and assessment. The self-evaluation document notes that the FdSc Computing team has also used relevant National Occupational Standards. This resulted in the embedding of employability skills within the curriculum. Similarly, the FdA Management and Business Enterprise and the BA (Hons) Business and Management top-up programme made use of the Management National Occupational Standards when designing the programmes. In addition, although the University of Huddersfield's franchise provision is developed and approved by the University, College staff do have an input into the programme design. This programme is aligned with the 2014 Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England. Similarly, while the College has no involvement with the development of the Pearson Higher National provision, there is liaison with external bodies, for example the construction team works with the Institute of Civil Engineers.

1.67 The self-evaluation document provides details of the approach taken by the various awarding partners to the use of external and independent expertise for the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The programme approval, external examiner and annual reports, and associated action plans, were considered in order to test this expectation. Staff were aware of the importance of the use of external expertise in ensuring that that the programmes met appropriate academic standards.

1.68 The process works well. College staff engage with the awarding partners wherever appropriate. Appropriate use is made of external examiners to ensure maintenance of academic standards. The College engages appropriately with the relevant processes and in addition makes use of relevant sector bodies and employers.

1.69 The awarding bodies and organisation are responsible for ensuring the use of external expertise at the relevant stages of the process of development and delivery of the programmes. College staff fully engage with the processes, when required, and in addition use a range of expertise in association with relevant sector organisations. There is use of a combination of external and independent sources of expertise by the awarding bodies and organisation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

1.71 The College's main responsibilities for maintaining academic standards are for adhering to the policies and processes of its awarding bodies and organisation, which it generally does effectively. All Expectations in this judgement area are met. The associated level of risk is low in six out of the seven Expectations.

1.72 There is a moderate risk under Expectation A2.2 and a recommendation that the College should develop contextualised definitive records for Higher National programmes, to comply with the requirements of the awarding organisation and to ensure consistency across the provision. Although the definitive course documents for the programmes delivered with awarding bodies are satisfactory there are inconsistencies in the definitive documentation relating to Higher National programmes, and some instances where the College is not meeting the requirements of the awarding organisation. The associated risk is moderate, as the recommendation relates to an area of weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance arrangements relating to quality assurance, in specific areas of the provision.

1.73 There are no features of good practice in this area and no affirmations.

1.74 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and the other awarding organisation at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The College does not have degree awarding powers and its provision is reliant on validation from the degree-awarding bodies (mainly with Teesside University) with whom there are formal agreements in place. The College, as part of the collaboration with the University of Huddersfield, also delivers franchised provision. In this arrangement the College has no role to play in the design, development and approval of the programmes other than as part of a wider consortium input into module design. The Higher National provision is prescribed by Pearson. However, programme teams are able to select appropriate optional units in response to student or sector needs.

2.2 The College has its own internal approval process for the consideration of proposed degree programmes before proceeding to formal validation by the awarding body. The Higher Education Strategy informs the systematic internal course approval process for all new proposals, initially enabling staff to draw up a three-year plan. The plan is an essential element of the business case approval process, which is considered by the Director of Higher Education and the Assistant Principal Quality and Performance prior to a full panel meeting.

2.3 All proposals must include reference to the FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the qualification characteristics; demonstration of engagement with Labour Market Intelligence data, referencing consultation and collaboration with the vital role of employers to ensure relevancy to the student body; and consultation with student groups. Programme teams also consult business support staff, such as those from the library, in order to ensure that the programme can be adequately resourced.

2.4 Teesside University must be notified of intended development once internal agreement to proceed has been confirmed. There were 12 programmes successfully validated in 2013-14 and two more in 2014-15.

2.5 The approvals process proceeds with programme leaders and teams, together with a lecturer from another subject area, a critical friend, who provides insight into the developments. To ensure that consistent information, advice and guidance is provided to all validating teams the process is supported throughout by the Higher Education Manager.

2.6 The degree-awarding body, College staff, link tutors and externals all participate in the final approval event. Conditions of approval arising are completed within a set timeframe and recommendations are reflected on during the next annual programme report and discussed at Quality Enhancement Visits. Faced with the inability to proceed with further approval submissions, this situation is in the process of being resolved. Alternative degree-awarding bodies have been identified and agreements are being progressed.

2.7 The arrangements described would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also

held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.8 The review team examined the College and degree-awarding body strategic and operational documentation, and talked with senior and academic staff, support services staff, employers and students. The critical reading panel notes confirm their various levels of engagement. The Quality Enhancement Visit report demonstrated the external view that the required academic standards are met. Internal processes were confirmed in the example of a stage one report on the internal College approval of public services.

2.9 The review team found good examples in the programme approval process involving strong ongoing relationships with employers and alumni, who spoke convincingly about their established and ongoing commitment. They told the review team how they usefully inform the currency in curriculum development, especially in programmes such as FdA Web Design and the FdA Independent Games Development, where employer links and input are highly prized. Employers also spoke about their involvement in curriculum planning for the new ASIC. Their knowledge and understanding of their specific sectors support programme design, particularly in enabling level 3 students to progress to higher education and higher skills, and is shared with the College through employer membership of the ASIC Operational Steering Group.

2.10 External engagement is also noted in programme design for Performing Arts, and in assessment design for the Engineering and Public Services programmes, where employers and students have supported the potential transition from a Higher National qualification to a foundation degree and assisted in selecting units that best meet their needs and potential employment opportunities.

2.11 In recognition that the current comprehensive College approval process for all higher education degree programmes is fit for purpose, senior management are to establish a similar process for the approval of Higher Nationals to align them with degree programmes. This will take place as soon as the formal arrangements are in place with new and/or existing degree-awarding partners. However, a clearly defined approvals process is not yet in place for the approval of Higher National programmes. The review team **recommends** that the College devise and implement a robust process for the design, development and approval of Higher National programmes.

2.12 Pearson prescribes the content of the Higher National programmes delivered by the College. The Pearson specifications also include expectations relating to learning hours for each of its awards. However, following examination of the evidence offered by the College, the review team finds that it remains unclear that the overall learning hours allocated for the Higher National certificate and diploma in Business meet those specifications. The review team **recommends** that the College ensure that the models of delivery for Higher National programmes meet the requirements in the specifications of the awarding organisation.

2.13 Internal approval events and panels usefully employ a critical reader model at module level to query and challenge content to ensure an objective view of the design and development of the new programme content.

2.14 Staff confirmed their successful engagement in some approval panels and that staff receive remission time for writing new programmes and during the first year of new programme delivery. Staff said that employers, as well as current and former students, had been consulted about the content of new programmes. One student met by the review team had been a member of an approval panel. Alumni also confirmed their engagement in the process.

2.15 The College generally operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes. However, there is not currently a formal process for the academic approval of Higher National programmes and there is also a lack of clarity as to whether the HNC/D Business programmes meet the Pearson specification in respect of learning hours. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is moderate, as the recommendations relate to a weakness in the operation of part of the College's governance arrangements relating to quality assurance, in specific areas of the provision.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.16 The College is responsible for recruitment, selection and admission to its programmes, regardless of awarding body or mode of study. Full-time students are generally admitted via UCAS (although the College also permits internal applications), while part-time students apply directly. A Higher Education Admissions Code of Practice is available on the College website. This articulates the College's recruitment strategy, defines the principles that govern admissions across all higher education programmes, and sets out selection processes. The College's admissions strategy is grounded in HEFCE's identification of Wakefield as a 'cold spot' for higher education participation. The College has responded with a growth strategy, particularly in relation to those areas identified as skills shortages. The Code of Practice also contains detailed terms and conditions for applicants and references to the College's accreditation of prior learning, disability, and equality and diversity policies. Where the College has to close programmes, it advises prospective students on alternative programmes. The College also has a Higher Education Admissions Appeals Code of Practice that informs applicants of the circumstances in which they can seek a review of decisions.

2.17 Standard entry criteria are set as part of the validation process. Adjustments are permitted in order to widen participation. For example, the curriculum area for Computing, Business and Enterprise, and Digital Industries is currently undertaking a pilot scheme around alternative recruitment approaches. The programme leader is working to identify skills not identified through traditional academic qualifications.

2.18 Programme leaders or the admissions team initially assess applications against published entry criteria and then consider further evidence of academic potential, including personal statements and predicted results. On some programmes, prospective students may be invited to interview or will produce a portfolio of work to demonstrate their potential. The Strategic Marketing Group has decided to pilot streamlining the admissions process for internal applicants progressing from level 3, who can now receive a conditional offer without interview. Rejected applications are sent to the Director of Higher Education for approval of the decision. The College's central administration team includes a dedicated member of staff for higher education, who works with the Higher Education Student Engagement Coordinator to ensure the admissions process operates in a timely manner.

2.19 All higher education policies, procedures and codes of practice are reviewed every three years, although there is scope for any significant developments or requirements to be enacted earlier if necessary.

2.20 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including example materials used during the admissions process, such as induction materials and offer letters. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.21 Students receive useful information about their programmes at interview, enrolment and induction. The College produces detailed guidance and advice for its staff, including interview guidance, and has templates for communicating with prospective students at each stage of the process (sent by the Higher Education Student Engagement Coordinator). Post-results confirmation letters contain programme and fee information. The website contains information about clearing. Prospective applicants can contact the Higher Education Coordinator or admissions staff by phone during the clearing period or can receive a call back from programme staff; the Director of Higher Education or Assistant Principal Academic and Higher Education can step in and decide on entry if programme staff are non-contactable. The College is undertaking an audit of higher education information. For admissions, this includes updating UCAS tariffs and prospectuses, and anticipation of Competition and Markets Authority regulation. The Director of Higher Education, Marketing Team, heads of curriculum, and programme teams have met, and guidance has been distributed on the provision of information to prospective students. The Course Information Team has issued new templates and run training sessions on the new pro-solution system for leaflet updates.

2.22 The Higher Education Student Engagement Coordinator is well qualified and able to engage with regional and national admissions standards working groups to the College's benefit.

2.23 In terms of monitoring, HETLEG, HEQSG and the Marketing Working Group effectively monitor the dissemination of information about recruitment and admissions; recruitment reports impacting on internal targets are also discussed at HETELG. HETLEG meetings disseminate recruitment information to programme teams with regular admissions-related agenda items, including scholarships, conversion rates and internal application forms. These meetings also consider admissions data as it impacts the curriculum. The Higher Education Strategic Marketing Group, the Higher Education Participation Group, and the local level higher education marketing and recruitment meetings make use of admissions data. The College is also able to collect data about its applicants via its enrolment form, which is partly designed to meet degree-awarding bodies' data-gathering requirements.

2.24 The review team explored the pilot approach that the Curriculum Area for Computing, Business and Enterprise and Digital Industries is taking to admissions, in particular the use of set projects to test academic and creative potential in the FdA Independent Games Design programme. The relevant validation documents allow for students to be admitted to the programme partly on the basis of an assessed 'portfolio interview' for which applicants have produced 'samples of their own media, art or design work' and preferably 'examples of previous game design and/or technology work'. As noted above, the College's Higher Education Admissions Code of Practice allows for the use of portfolios and the team was provided with a useful 'creative brief' outlining the specific work applicants to the Computing foundation degree programme are asked to produce. While the latter contains detailed information on the tasks themselves, neither it nor the programme webpages or code of practice outline precisely how the portfolio will be assessed. There is no clear indication, for example, about whether or how the artwork, coding or reflective elements are weighted. The team heard that the use of these creative briefs would be supported by a policy from next year. While recognising that the scheme was a pilot, without sufficient indication of criteria or weightings the team could not be sure the process enabled consistent and transparent decision making. The review team **recommends** that the College implement a policy and processes to ensure consistent decision making in admissions by portfolio or project.

2.25 The College generally has reliable and valid admissions procedures underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the recommendation relates to

the need to amend details in the processes for admissions by portfolio or project, which will enable the College to meet the Expectation more fully.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.26 The College provided details of a range of mechanisms that are used to review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that staff who deliver higher education are appropriately qualified, have opportunities for development and that their contribution to the delivery of higher education is recognised. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy makes specific reference to the development of students as independent learners. The annual review processes and student feedback mechanisms ensure that the College is aware of the effectiveness of the learning resources available to students. Information derived as a consequence of the College's Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Process also informs this area of activity. External examiner reports provided comment on the appropriateness of learning opportunities. Quality Enhancement Visits managed by Teesside University provide a further opportunity for the consideration of the appropriateness of the learning environment. Information from a range of sources is brought together in the Higher Education Departmental Review, which is considered through the committee structure. This is to ensure strategic oversight and subsequent development of appropriate learning opportunities. The College Strategic Plan includes as one its objectives: 'develop a discrete higher education ethos and culture to promote scholarly activity, research and innovative practice in teaching and learning'.

2.27 The College has introduced a new approach to the appointment of higher education staff. Any new teaching staff appointments that include a higher education element are reviewed by the Director of Higher Education, and higher education-specific questioning forms part of the interview. All higher education staff either have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. The College promotes existing staff with high level qualifications into teaching on the higher education programmes. The Higher Education Manager mentors these new staff. In order to ensure further development of this group they become members of the Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Group and must attend CPD. All recently appointed staff have had some higher education teaching experience, if only as part of teacher training. The business case planning for new programmes requires heads of curriculum to identify any staff development needs. The extensive professional development for academic and support staff, which enhances their contribution to students' learning opportunities, is **good practice**.

2.28 The College's Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Process has been in use since 2012. It is informed by a set of College-derived standards for teaching and learning and is used to facilitate the dissemination of good practice across the provision, and the identification of developmental requirements. Higher education specific activity associated with the peer observation of higher education teaching was introduced in October 2015. The Teaching and Learning Improvement Team has been involved in delivering sessions on higher education teaching observation to ensure consistency of approach. Draft documentation has been developed and the pilot activity will be introduced in the 2016-17 academic year. There is a new requirement to include higher education actions in appraisals and a 'Recognised higher education Teacher Status' process is in development.

2.29 A higher education staff development programme is currently being devised with the recently recruited Learning and Development Business Partner. Staff development needs may be self-identified or may be identified from teaching observation, student feedback or learning walks. The Workforce Learning and Development Team is responsible for monitoring and implementing CPD activity across the College. Staff are encouraged to undertake further qualifications. From 2013-15 the College funded 12 postgraduate qualifications for its staff.

2.30 The College holds an annual higher education conference, which higher education staff are required to attend. There is encouragement for scholarly activity and a higher education CPD budget helps fund Higher Education Academy membership fees and attendance at higher education-related conferences.

2.31 The Quality and Learning Improvement Manager prepares annual reports of teaching and learning specifically related to higher education. This allows identification of areas of improvement, good practice and areas for development. This information informs the annual business review presentation and the Higher Education Departmental Reviews. This information (along with programme-level reports and annual reports submitted to the awarding partners) informs the Quality Improvement Plan, which is considered within the committee structure and helps inform the continuous improvement of the higher education provision at the College.

2.32 The College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy includes expectations across all of the provision of the College. In order to ensure appropriate focus for higher education, a separate appendix has recently been approved. This includes specific reference to the development of independent learning skills among higher education students.

2.33 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.34 The review team considered the extensive evidence provided to support their approach to learning and teaching. Staff confirmed that they felt appropriately supported and that they were able to take advantage of the opportunities to further develop themselves. In the meetings with students further confirmation of the emphasis placed on them as individual learners was provided.

2.35 The wide range of approaches to ensuring that staff have the appropriate opportunities to develop their approaches to learning and teaching are well documented. The College has mechanisms in place to continually evaluate the approach to learning and teaching and it supports enhancement activities across the provision. Students commented favourably on the learning opportunities available to them, and specifically on the quality of teaching. External examiner reports provide evidence that students have the appropriate knowledge and skills.

2.36 The College provides learning opportunities that enable students to develop as independent learners, and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. The College has in place a series of mechanisms ensuring that staff can continue to enhance their teaching and learning practices in an environment that is supportive of both staff and students. There is a commitment to independent learning. The College is not complacent and further developments to support staff and student learning are being put in place. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.37 The College places significant emphasis on ensuring that students have the relevant opportunities to develop their potential across the range of the provision. The College provides academic and personal support from induction onwards, including bespoke study skills support for much of the provision. In addition, there is support from specialised function areas such as the library, and one-to-one sessions are available for all students. Arrangements are in place to support students with additional learning needs. Students are encouraged to provide feedback on all aspects of the provision directly to College staff, via formal surveys and by making use of the student representative system. The annual programme reporting systems ensure that the College and awarding bodies have sufficient information on which to base decisions to further enhance the provision.

2.38 The Strategic Plan places significant emphasis on the importance of the higher education provision providing opportunities for students to obtain qualifications and skills relevant to the needs of local employers. The College is aware that it serves an area of low participation in higher education and is committed to a range of activities to widen access and promote student success. In order to meet this aim a decision was made to concentrate on level 4 and 5 provision (foundation degrees and Pearson Higher National provision) with some limited level 6 activity. Much of the provision is in curriculum areas delivered by the College at level 3 in order to provide progression opportunities. All of the foundation degrees contain 'employability-related modules' to ensure that there are opportunities for students to develop transferable personal and professional skills as academic knowledge. There are a range of opportunities for engagement with employers, offering other outlets for students to develop their employability skills (see section 5).

2.39 The majority of the College's higher education provision is delivered at the main City campus. Other sites are used for the more specialist subject areas. For example, the Waterton Building is used as the Centre for Performing Arts and the Lightwave Centre provides sports facilities. The University Centre was developed at the city centre campus providing a useful resource specifically for higher education students. Students commented favourably on this provision, although it was recognised that there were increasing demands on the space as a consequence of the increase in numbers of higher education students.

2.40 All programmes have personal tutorial support. Similarly, study support is available for all students irrespective of the awarding body or mode of attendance. This is delivered by the Study Support Team and Library Services either as timetabled events or bespoke requested sessions. For students on the Teesside University provision a new higher education 'footprint' was introduced for the 2015-16 academic year in response to academic skills needs of students. This provides details of the range and extent of support that is made available to the student. These arrangements are closely monitored to ensure that they are effective and meet the needs of students.

2.41 The College has ambitious plans for the future. It has been successful in obtaining funding to develop the ASIC. The building is due for completion by Easter 2017 and will include specialist facilities to support its creative, digital and engineering provision, a business school and a 'Business Incubation' centre. The College has carefully considered the use of the building by involving a range of stakeholders including employers in its development. Both College alumni and current students have been involved in providing

input into the decisions around how the building will be configured and used in order to better support higher education provision in the future. The involvement of employers and students in the development of significant projects that contribute to the Higher Education Strategy is **good practice**.

2.42 Student learning resources are considered as part of the Teesside University validation processes. In addition, the routine quality monitoring and the Quality Enhancement Visit process carried out by the University provides further opportunity to comment on resources. Routine visits from other university partners and Higher National external examiners provide further checks on resource availability. Students comment on resources as part of the feedback arrangements. The annual programme and departmental reviews reflect information from all these sources of information and inform College-level resource planning activities.

2.43 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.44 The information provided by the College and by staff indicates that this area of activity is prioritised at the College in line with the College strategic priorities. There is recognition that students require appropriate, often individualised, support, as well as physical resources if they are to be successful. The programme approval processes and review activity carried out by the College and awarding partners provides further evidence of the mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources to support higher education provision.

2.45 The process of monitoring and evaluating arrangements and resources is comprehensive and results in appropriate actions being taken. Students are aware of the arrangements and resources available to them and that College staff are continuing to further develop resources to support the provision. However, student feedback indicates that there is some concern about the availability of specific higher education resources at times that students are in attendance at the College. Overall, students recognise that the improvements being made will further support their learning. The involvement of a range of stakeholders in the development of the new facilities provides further evidence that the College is committed to ensuring that the arrangements and resources available support students effectively.

2.46 The College has in place the appropriate mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the arrangements in place to support students. As a consequence there is recognition that further development of support activities and resources is required to support the increasing number of higher education students and programmes, and plans are well advanced to take this forward. However, the current arrangements and resources are appropriate to ensure students develop their personal, academic and professional potential. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.47 The College has a Student Engagement Code of Practice, and although this document was in draft at the time of review it codified many initiatives already underway. For example, although the College Students' Union focuses on further education students, it has a higher education Students' Union Officer who sits on HEQSG. This student also leads the Student Representative Consultative Committee, which brings together student representatives for each cohort. These cohort representatives attend SSCCs for their programmes each semester. Recently introduced student representative guidance outlines expectations, benefits and responsibilities for these roles. In addition to the representative scheme, the College also appoints Student Ambassadors, who are involved in outreach initiatives.

2.48 Students are also directly involved in quality assurance and enhancement. For example, students have the opportunity to participate in annual programme review meetings, which feed into the annual programme review document, and awarding body reviews. Although it has not yet occurred in practice, students can also be involved in internal periodic review. There is also some student input into the approval process for foundation degrees. Students can also participate in staff recruitment. In addition, the College operates four layers of student feedback: the National Student Survey, DLHE, internal student survey and module evaluation questionnaires. Where appropriate, this survey data is reported to HEQSG, considered at curriculum level for action planning and preparing the departmental review, and reviewed at programme level for module changes and resource review. Annual programme reviews ensure that staff record feedback received through surveys and student committees and comment on actions taken. Students also form part of the formal feedback session with the member of staff during the observation of teaching and learning.

2.49 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including meeting minutes, programme information, and quality assurance documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.50 Student ambassadors and representatives are well supported, feel listened to and gain valuable support to help them to build confidence and communication skills. The College has also been responsive in the operation of its representative systems. In response to poor attendance at cross-College meetings, it developed the new system described above that mixes programme-level and College-level representation opportunities. To ensure this representation is effective, students are supported by a dedicated Student Engagement Team, with which they have a productive working relationship. Programme leaders facilitate the election of student representatives and there is helpful guidance for students and staff about this process and their responsibilities. The precise format and frequency of meetings varies (University of Huddersfield programmes have two student panel/centre committees per year, and the BA Early Years also chooses to run a shortened SSCC); these systems operate effectively and in most cases minutes are uploaded onto the awarding body or College systems. Students have requested, and the College has agreed, to hold three of the broader cross-College meetings with the Director of Higher Education per year.

2.51 Likewise, students are effectively involved in quality assurance and enhancement projects. Public Services Management and FdA Independent Games Development students attend the working group for the ASIC building project. The FdA Independent Games Development students were also joined by those from the FdA Web Design programme in attending the manufacturers meeting during the design stages. Student feedback has led to changes being made to the FdA Public Services Management programme documentation and their involvement in revalidation processes has resulted in minor/intermediate programme modifications. To further enhance student involvement in quality assurance, the College intends to introduce a student representative/ambassador specific newsletter and a 'You Said, We Did' process using SSCC minutes. While there are some concerns about the low response rate to surveys, the results of surveys are well evaluated at programme and College level via annual programme reviews.

2.52 The College has representation systems that have been designed to meet the needs of higher education students and a range of effective opportunities for direct and indirect student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.53 The College reviewed its Higher Education Assessment Policy in 2015-16, enabling it to implement more detailed minimum expectations for assessment and timeliness of feedback. The policy requires staff to provide clear and developmental feedback to students, both for formative and summative assessments. The purpose and aims of the policy are clarified through scoping its inclusive and comprehensive detailing of assessment, academic standards, key concepts and expectations, and the regular monitoring and review of the Policy. The policy is accessible online to staff and students, and does not supersede the regulations of the degree-awarding bodies or Pearson.

2.54 Academic staff are given detailed guidance about their roles and responsibilities for assessment in the programme leaders' handbook and further clarified in the Higher Education Assessment Policy.

2.55 The key guidance for staff delivering the Higher National provision is the BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment 2015-16, which is employed alongside the College policy. The College plans to bring the Higher National provision into line with the assessment board policies and procedures, which are used for university-validated programmes, through the development of new board procedures. Interim assessment boards are optional and mid-term boards will be held for part-time students in their transition year.

2.56 The Higher Education Assessment Policy also clarifies the College's responsibility for ensuring the competence of staff responsible for assessment within higher education. Leeds Beckett University and Teesside University approve all programme staff who will be involved in teaching and/or marking. Following discussion at HEQSG and staff consultation, the College is currently working on a new framework for recognised higher education teacher status.

2.57 The College recognises that procedures for checking alignment with, and adherence to, the Higher Education Assessment Policy now need to be implemented, with specific consideration of the timeliness of feedback to students given the criticisms in the student submission to this report. A self-regulation process is in the process of being implemented as a first-checking mechanism providing information on all work returned using proprietary software.

2.58 The College adheres to the assessment policies of the University of Huddersfield for the franchise provision. This provision aligns to lifelong learning standards, and specifically the 2014 Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training - England. Centre assessment boards are attended by the external examiner and College staff, who must be in attendance for credit to be awarded.

2.59 Assessment strategies and criteria for Teesside University programmes are approved during the validation process. If necessary, subsequent modifications arising from annual monitoring or external examiner visits may be made via the programme modification process. During the Quality Enhancement Visits, link tutors confirm arrangements for

programme delivery and assessments, and also that assessments have been approved by the external examiner. Link tutors confirm that students generally agree that assessment and feedback is prompt, assessments are clear and that they know what to expect throughout the year.

2.60 The College code of practice around plagiarism and 'unfair means' is available on the public website and on the higher education student VLE. The College has an expectation that, where the summative assessment type is appropriate (for example essay or report), plagiarism-detection software will be used as the submission method. Tutors use the virtual learning environment (VLE) to guide students to the correct submission point.

2.61 The College-approved Accreditation of Prior Learning Code of Practice is available on the public website, the higher education student VLE, and the staff higher education intranet site. Prospective students are notified of the availability of the accreditation/ recognition of prior learning process within the prospectus, course leaflets and the public website.

2.62 Programme leaders are required to provide an overview of assessment deadlines and grading criteria when considering the module handbooks. Programme teams can choose to further contextualise grading criteria where it will assist the students to better understand how their summative work can better align with the requirements of the assessment strategy. Within the College audit process of module handbooks, assessment opportunities and coverage of the learning outcomes are confirmed.

2.63 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including the Higher Education Assessment Policy; higher education accreditation of prior learning guidance; higher education Plagiarism, Cheating and Unfair Means Code of Practice; student survey reports; standards verifier reports; and assessment and exam board reports and minutes. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.64 Following the termination of the Teesside University partnership, the College has negotiated a further agreement with the University to extend its delivery so as to mitigate any negative impact on students. College management have secured an appropriate new validating partner through the institutional recognition process, and are currently undergoing formal discussions to establish next steps with Leeds Beckett University and Hull University to agree policies and procedures.

2.65 The College's Higher Education Assessment Policy is easily accessible to all stakeholders on its public website, as is the Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy, higher education academic appeals, and the Plagiarism, Cheating and Unfair Means Code of Practice.

2.66 The College recognises that the current practices for exam boards are variable and would be greatly improved by all boards following a common format. As a result, progress on the further development of assessment board procedures for Higher National provision is underway and is due to be in place for the 2016-17 academic year; the intention is to provide more detailed minimum expectations for assessment.

2.67 In conversations with staff, students, employers and alumni, the review team discovered that the currency of the content of learning outcomes is effectively informed by employers in most programme areas. The assessment opportunities in covering the learning outcomes is wide ranging, enabling students to achieve. Where any issues regarding bunching of assessments or volume are found, programme teams are able to make speedy responses and readily adjust accordingly. Students find that learning objectives align with

assessments and mostly agree that academic staff provide individual information about what they need to do to improve. Assignment briefs provide information on what is required to achieve high grades and peer critiques feature in some programmes.

2.68 Students say that there are varied types of assessment opportunities, often linked to the relevant employment sector. In the HND Performance Theatre programme industry practitioners and professionals are currently used as external reference points, visiting as workshop leaders and guest lecturers. This enables the learning outcomes to be closely associated with those expected in the workplace. The Higher National Engineering programme is putting an employer forum in place to enable assessments to be more employer focused, and therefore to be closely aligned to learning outcomes and current industry practice. Other programme areas are considering establishing a similar forum.

2.69 Academic staff say that new staff teaching on Higher Nationals receives a lot of support from more experienced peer staff, so that they are very clear about grading criteria. There are appropriate processes for sound moderation of assessment decisions. Records of degree assessment boards show consistent processes are followed. External examiners and standards verifier reports confirm that assessment processes are in place and effective.

2.70 The review team found that there are a number of simultaneous changes in processes and procedures in development. However, they conclude that this is coherently managed as a part of an ongoing evolutionary process.

2.71 The College has equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment that enable students to demonstrate achievement of intended learning outcomes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.72 Awarding bodies are responsible for the appointment of external examiners for all higher education provision. The process for the nomination of external examiners varies; the College is responsible for the nomination of external examiners for the Teesside University and Leeds Beckett University linked programmes. The awarding partners are responsible for the nomination of examiners linked to the University of Huddersfield and Pearson programmes. External examiners are asked to comment at assessment boards as well as to endorse results.

2.73 All external examiners are required to complete an annual report, which is submitted directly to the awarding body or organisation before being forwarded to the College. A response to the report, and an action plan if required, is produced by College staff. The response is audited by the Director of Higher Education, before submission to the relevant university and onwards to the external examiner. Oversight by the College is maintained via the production of a summary report that highlights areas for action. This report, which is considered by HEQSG, helps ensure central oversight of this activity.

2.74 Two members of staff act as external examiners for other organisations and other staff are being encouraged to take on this role. This helps ensure that staff are aware of the mechanism for quality assurance within higher education and for the dissemination of good practice.

2.75 Processes for dealing with serious concerns exist at all awarding bodies but have not been used for programmes delivered at the College.

2.76 College staff at all levels are aware of the process detailed above. In addition, the handbook for programme leaders details how they should liaise with external examiners for the process of moderation. The overall summary reports provide useful oversight across all College provision.

2.77 Additionally for Higher National programmes, the Quality and Learning Improvement Manager is the registered quality nominee and key contact for communication with the external examiner appointed by Pearson. The quality nominee also monitors external examiner reports, distributes these to programme teams, and comments on their content. The quality nominee attends awarding body regional quality nominee meetings to ensure the College has up-to-date information.

2.78 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including the procedures, external examiner reports, the overview of external examiner reports, and minutes of relevant meetings. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.79 The process appears to work in practice for almost all of the provision. There is evidence of the process working effectively, appropriate action planning taking place, and oversight within the management/committee structure of the College. The one area where this process had not been working effectively was within the engineering provision. The external examiner reports had raised concerns around assessment and staffing issues

but these were not acted on immediately. While the College has now taken steps to address these issues this could have been identified earlier.

2.80 Students have access to external examiner reports via the VLE. In addition, they have the opportunity to discuss the content of external examiner reports with programme staff at SSCC meetings.

2.81 There is, however, no one document that describes the process for the consideration of external examiner reports. It would be appropriate for such a document to be developed to ensure that any changes in staff do not result in a lack of engagement or oversight of this activity.

2.82 The awarding bodies and organisation and the College have detailed policies and procedures that are being used effectively. The one area where this was not the case is now being addressed. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.83 Programmes validated by Teesside University undergo interim review in line with the conditions set at the point of validation. Periodic review of all its programmes are conducted by the awarding body on a six-year cycle, from which any significant changes can prompt an institutional or interim review.

2.84 All programmes are subject to annual monitoring according to the specific requirement of the degree-awarding bodies. This is not formally required by Pearson for the Higher Nationals but nevertheless the College requires that these programmes complete annual reviews using the same format as the degree programmes.

2.85 Teesside University requires all modules to be evaluated. Staff use the outcomes of the module evaluation questionnaire analysis to identify areas of good practice, or where the modules need further or developmental work that can be highlighted in annual programme reviews. Annual Quality Enhancement Visits are made by the degree-awarding body for each programme. The results of these, including the action plans, inform annual programme monitoring and reviews.

2.86 Finalised annual programme reviews take account of external examiners and standards verifier reports, module evaluation reports, National Student Survey and DLHE data, programme data and action plans, which are reported on to SSCCs and the annual review meeting. Actions as a result of the annual reporting process and other considerations may result in modification or in complete rewrites of the programmes.

2.87 A strategic level overview enables consistent practice to be maintained as a result of annual programme review summaries and action plans, examined by the Principalship and HEQSG, and used to develop the full departmental review for higher education. Programme-based data is reviewed at each HEQSG meeting.

2.88 Action plans have clearly delegated responsibilities and time frames for completion and, overall, are monitored by the HEQSG.

2.89 The recently introduced Programme Leader Handbook sets out the roles and responsibilities for the various processes, including student feedback and external examiners' reports, relating to the annual monitoring and reviewing of all programmes. These processes have been extensively reviewed to align with all degree-awarding body partner agreements.

2.90 In 2015-16 the College introduced an internal higher education cyclic periodic review process, with a set schedule to 2021-22 to review one curriculum area each academic year. The process for 2015-16 has been developed as a risk management approach.

2.91 Although Teesside University require all modules to be evaluated as a formal requirement for this 2015-16 academic year, it was an internal requirement prior to this, as is the module evaluation analysis document. Pearson provision does not require a formalised unit evaluation, but the College undertakes the exercise anyway, as it is felt to be a key mechanism for maintaining and improving provision.

2.92 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.93 The review team examined relevant documentation that included memoranda of agreement, terms of reference for the higher education committees, College policies and strategies, programme team handbooks, the annual programme reports for the degree-awarding bodies, module evaluations the Quality Enhancement Visit report, the Quality Improvement Plan, the newly developed internal College periodic review timetable, and action plans.

2.94 The format used for programme-level reports enables reporting to be completed thoroughly. Although all department, subject area and level action plans seen by the review team are thorough, some department reviews and the Quality Improvement Plan action plans align with the common inspection framework, due to the software currently used by those departments, rather than the Quality Code.

2.95 Most actions are clearly described and designated responsibilities identified. There are good opportunities for students' and employers' comments to be included, as well as good practice to be identified and reported as part of the review process. The review team found that employers and programme teams have strong professional links. Feedback and interaction between them provides ongoing dialogue for the continuing review of the relevance of the curriculum and resources.

2.96 There is good evidence from the actions taken that the College is positively responsive to the end-of-module evaluations; students confirmed that this is so.

2.97 The recently established internal periodic review process is embryonic and being used propitiously to reflect on a programme area where there was inconsistency in the alignment of standards. The intention is to include more external input in this process in the following round of the College periodic review. The review team **affirms** the actions taken to implement a process of internal periodic review, and its use to address an area of particular concern.

2.98 The College has timely and effective systematic processes for the monitoring and review of programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.99 The College has a higher education complaints procedure that operates beneath the processes of its awarding bodies and organisation. This procedure is aligned with the requirements of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and is available via the VLE, website and higher education SharePoint. The procedure contains helpful definitions of terms and the policy's scope, provides opportunities to resolve complaints informally, and specifies appropriate timeframes for responses at each stage. The Director of Higher Education receives all formal complaints and an investigating officer is appointed. There is provision for the Principal to review the handling of complaints should a student remain dissatisfied, and the policy ultimately directs students to the OIA's procedures. The awarding bodies' or organisation's operations handbooks define how their processes intersect with the College's. Where complaints relate to the College's franchised provision, students are directed to College procedures, where their complaints relate to College areas of responsibility, and awarding body procedures when these are more appropriate. The College's awarding bodies and the OIA require an annual return logging the number of complaints. HEQSG receives these annual reports, but as there were no formal complaints in 2014-15 this will first occur in 2015-16.

2.100 The College introduced a Higher Education Academic Appeals Code of Practice and a separate Higher Education Admissions Appeals Code of Practice, both of which are available via the website. The policy clearly defines the grounds for academic appeals, lists terms of membership for panels, refers to awarding body or organisation procedures where appropriate, and makes provision for students to be accompanied by a friend when attending hearings. The Director of Higher Education presents an annual analysis of anonymised complaints data to the Assistant Principals.

2.101 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation (including anonymised complaints documentation), a range of published information including programme handbooks, and the College website. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.102 The College has received just one formal complaint under its higher education procedures, and this was investigated in a timely manner, with the student being informed of the decision and their right to appeal. Most complaints have been resolved informally, with prompt action taken by senior committees where appropriate. The College's awarding bodies and student representatives have praised the College's handling of complaints. Governors receive an annual summary of complaints data. In the past, this reporting took the form of a PowerPoint presentation by the Assistant Principal Quality and Performance, but complaints data is now available through the performance dashboard reported at all governor meetings.

2.103 At the time of review, there had been no academic appeals or admissions appeals. While internal survey data suggested that not all students knew how to make an appeal, programme handbooks, inductions, and the VLE refer to both the complaints and appeals procedures. A singular exception to this was the University of Huddersfield programme

handbook, but the College explained that since this related to a franchised programme it does not have the ability to alter the content.

2.104 There are widely disseminated complaints and appeals procedures, and the timely resolution of both informal and formal complaints, at the College. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.105 The awarding bodies have responsibility for the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities. They have identified the areas for which the College does have responsibility. The College does, however, have responsibility for the management of the work placement on some of its validated provision with Teesside University. The Management of Placement-Based Activity Code of Practice details how the College manages this aspect of its provision.

2.106 The College has responsibility for the management of work placements on three programmes delivered under a validation agreement with Teesside University. Before 2014-15 only the FdA Young Children's Learning and Development programme had a compulsory placement. The FdSc Health and Wellbeing, and more recently the BA (Hons) Performance Industries (top-up), also had placements.

2.107 The management of placement-based activities documentation produced by the College and approved by the University details how this activity is managed. This provides a general framework for delivery, and details the roles and expectations of the placement provider, mentor and coordinator. Each programme also has a programme-specific placement handbook, which provides background information about the programme, clarifies what is expected of the students, placement providers and programme teaching teams. Placement providers provide feedback on professional competences of the student but have limited input into the assessment of the student.

2.108 The teacher training provision delivered as a franchise arrangement via the University of Huddersfield does have placement requirements, and staff at the College assist students to find placements, but the management of all aspects of this activity is the responsibility of the University. There are no compulsory work placements with the Higher National provision.

2.109 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation (including placement documentation). The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

2.110 The processes associated with formal placement activity are managed effectively. Students, staff and employers are working effectively together and are supported by clearly defined processes. While other programmes did not include formal placement activity, work-based activities were an integral part of provision (see section 5).

2.111 The awarding bodies and organisation take responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities for programmes delivered at the College. The College is clear on what aspects of the provision it manages on behalf of its awarding partners. The College does, however, have responsibility for the arrangements associated with the delivery of credit-bearing work placement activity associated with three of its programmes. There is clear evidence that the College manages this aspect of its

programmes securely and effectively. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk 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

2.112 The College does not deliver postgraduate research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.114 All of the 10 applicable Expectations in this judgement area are met. Nine are judged to be of low risk and one of moderate risk.

2.115 There are three recommendations in this judgement area relating to the process for the design, development and approval of Higher National programmes; the models of delivery for Higher National programmes; and the policy and processes for ensuring consistent decision making in admissions by portfolio or project.

2.116 The review team affirms the actions taken by the College to implement a process of internal periodic review, and its use to address an area of particular concern.

2.117 The review team identifies a number of areas of good practice in the approach taken by the College to managing the quality of student learning opportunities. In particular, the team identifies as good practice the extensive professional development for academic and support staff, which enhances their contribution to students' learning opportunities; and the involvement of employers and students in the development of significant projects that contribute to the Higher Education Strategy.

2.118 The recommendations in this judgement area relate to areas where there is a need to amend or update details in documentation, or where there are weaknesses in a part of the governance arrangements. The recommendations, individually or collectively, are not indicative of any serious risks to the management of this area.

2.119 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **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 College's Higher Education Strategy outlines its approach to publishing information for prospective students, and its Higher Education Admissions Code of Practice details the College's commitment to providing fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy information.

3.2 While the agreements with awarding bodies confirm that they have a role in regulating information produced about their programmes, the College is primarily responsible for the management of its published information. The Marketing Team works with the Higher Education Student Engagement Coordinator and Higher Education Student Engagement Officer to maintain the higher education section of the College's website. These individuals confer with the Course Information Team, programme teams and heads of curriculum to ensure information is updated as needed. To facilitate strategic collaboration, both marketing and senior academic staff are members of HETLEG and the Higher Education Strategic Marketing Working Group. The Higher Education Student Engagement Coordinator has additional responsibilities regarding the VLE and email newsletters, and programme teams are responsible for updating relevant sections of the VLE, handbooks and assignment briefs.

3.3 A range of policies and audit mechanisms are used to verify the accuracy and completeness of information. The College is in the process of collating results from a full audit of its higher education information. Higher education course information audit sheets ensure that key pieces of information are reviewed and that specific responsibilities are assigned within programme teams or curriculum areas. An accompanying guidance document sets out required programme information in relation to Competition and Markets Authority and Quality Code statements. The Course Information Team audits programme leaflets using information management software. Foundation degree handbooks use awarding body templates and are approved at validation subject to annual review processes. Higher National programme handbooks are modelled on these and a module handbook template is intended to ensure consistency across the provision. A programme leader handbook advises staff on the design and issuing of handbooks to students. Since the QAA IQER report, the College created the VLE Standards for Higher Education document (June 2012), which set out the College's strategic approach to the VLE, minimum standards and best practices. Action plans are used to monitor the implementation of VLE systems and to plan for future strategic developments around e-learning. The College measures the effectiveness of its published information and use of the VLE through student surveys, the results of which are both collated and reviewed at programme level.

3.4 Although responsibilities and processes for managing published information are not codified into a single document, the combination of policy statements and guidance, oversight from HEQSG and HETLEG, ongoing audit processes, and managed digital workflows means that responsibilities for authorship, approval and review are well understood in practice.

3.5 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including the prospectus, website, programme handbooks, committee minutes and the results of student surveys. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

3.6 The main source of published information about higher education programmes is the College website. A discrete higher education section of the site contains appropriate information about individual programmes, as well as a comprehensive set of policies and procedures, including those concerning appeals, complaints, admissions, accreditation of prior learning, ethics, placements, and assessment and plagiarism policies. The College also produces a higher education prospectus, which is available both in print and to download from the website. Along with radio advertisements and targeted letters to prospective level 3 students, the student case study focus of this prospectus contributed to the College's higher education marketing campaign, which has received national recognition as winner of the TES Marketing/Communications Campaign of the Year Award 2014-15. Students access this information to varying degrees: 50 per cent of students surveyed by the College in 2015-16 had used the higher education prospectus and 66 per cent had visited the College website. However, the majority of those students who referred to either source of information found this comprehensive, useful and trustworthy.

3.7 The College does not currently have a student charter, but higher education students receive clear terms and conditions during enrolment. As discussed under Expectation B2, the overwhelming majority of students received an induction and considered this an effective means of preparing them for study, especially when returning to education. Enrolment packs include useful information on the library, support services, student representative guidance and an outline of the student ambassador role.

3.8 Registered students receive programme handbooks, module handbooks and assignment briefs where appropriate. These enable students to be clear about their programmes' intended learning outcomes, assessment criteria, deadlines and College procedures. Assignment briefs for Higher National programmes are reviewed internally and by the standards verifier, with changes being made when issues are identified. Students also have access to a College VLE that hosts information both particular to their programmes and of wider relevance to them as education students, such as employability resources or the minutes of student representatives' meetings. Eighty-eight per cent of students agreed that the learning resources made available on the VLE were beneficial to them. Where applicable, students are issued with informative work-placement handbooks, and the VLE also provides them with access to the Management of Placement-Based Activity Code of Practice. Staff training and support were provided during the move between VLE providers and the College has adopted a system of 'medals' to measure staff use of the VLE.

3.9 Most students make use of this programme information and find it accurate and helpful. That said, programme handbooks for Higher National qualifications vary considerably in detail and content. For example, while handbooks for HND Public Services and HND Music both refer to the appeals procedure, the explanation provided varies. Likewise, although some handbooks provide useful information such as extension forms, others, such as that for HND Business, contain only very basic information. Senior staff confirmed that the ongoing review of published information described above will shortly complete the alignment of this information across the College's provision. The review team **affirms** the actions taken to audit the quality and completeness of information relating to higher education programmes.

3.10 Notwithstanding variation in the quality of Higher National programme handbooks, the College provides a good range of accessible, fit-for-purpose and trustworthy information.

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

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.12 The Expectation in this judgement area is met and the associated risk level is low. The College has in place mechanisms to ensure that the information it produces relating to its higher education programmes is fit for purpose, accessible and reliable.

3.13 There is currently some inconsistency in the content of programme handbooks. The review team is, however, reassured by the fact that the College has instigated a process of auditing the quality and completeness of all programme information (leading the team to affirm this action), which should ensure that in future there is greater consistency across the provision. There are no recommendations associated with this judgement area and no areas of good practice.

3.14 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **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 College is particularly committed to enhancing student employability. The structure and membership of the Principalship and senior leadership teams enable higher education to be fully represented at this level. Heads of services are members of the senior leadership team. All strategic higher education groups report to the overarching Higher Education Development Group. This group annually reviews, updates and oversees the implementation of the College's Higher Education Strategy, providing strategic leadership on the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The Assistant Principal Academic and Higher Education chairs this group, and reports directly to the Principalship.

4.2 Enhancement is a standing item on the agenda of the HEQSG, which receives direct reports from HETLEG. HEQSG provides the oversight of the systematic integration of operational enhancement activities and guides the work of HETLEG through agreed actions. Specific actions have included: updates to College policies on student engagement; the introduction of Student Ambassadors; the review of higher education CPD; staff remission practices; compulsory focused activity on the Quality Code, FHEQ and the need for levelness; Higher Education Academy Fellowship; actions to address retention concerns by infilling taught sessions; and improved accommodation such as a new higher education centre.

4.3 The intention of HETLEG is to disseminate good practice and developments in teaching and learning; to contribute to internal and external reviews; act accordingly to actions required as a result of those reviews; and to discuss and implement programme-level enhancement activities. Senior academic staff, as well as the College marketing officer, are members of this group. HETLEG minutes indicate this wide forum facilitates discussions and actions on a range of programme-related imperatives that impact on the student experience.

4.4 Senior higher education staff, as members of the cross-College Quality Improvement Group, ensure that appropriate deliberations and action points (such as good practice or improvements) arising from these meetings inform the strategic higher education committees.

4.5 Enhancement is also a standing agenda item for the SSCC that normally meets at least twice annually. Examples that highlight the emphasis on enhancement in this context include the engagement of FdA Web Design staff with local sector businesses to ensure that the programme 'matches the fast-paced changes in the industry' and the BA (Hons) Business Management top-up programme, which is establishing a mentoring programme enabling level 6 students to work with level 3 and level 5 students around progression opportunities.

4.6 Other enhanced student learning opportunities include the creation of a dedicated higher education area, with improved facilities for learning and teaching, and the introduction of new foundation and top-up degrees in close liaison with employers, enabling student progression from level 3 further education into higher education.

4.7 The development of the ASIC is a result of LEP strategic priorities, with the aim of enhancing contact with employers and implementing plans for more cooperative learning between students on different programmes.

4.8 The College recognises that key performance data relating to student progression, degree classifications, observations of teaching and learning, attendance, and retention/ withdrawal figures, is an essential consideration when making decisions around the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

4.9 The College is proactive in engaging in activities to develop and share good practice, and to create opportunities for scholarship activity for staff. Staff are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to deliver at workshops, seminars and conferences, for example one programme leader recently delivering in Shanghai.

4.10 Quality Enhancement Visits, conducted by the link tutors from Teesside University, ensure that staff are delivering programmes according to the definitive documentation, as well as checking enhancement activities. This results in the production of a formal report that includes any actions relating to delivery, recommendations resulting from validations, and any issues relating to resources. Good practice within several degree programmes was noted as a result of these visits.

4.11 The College has taken a wide range of deliberate steps at strategic and operational levels to bring about improvements and to support the development of a distinctive higher education enhancement ethos. A sound example of this are the areas for development in the action plan arising from the Higher Education Strategy, where the responsibilities for the progress of actions are clearly identified.

4.12 The College is proactive in seeking opportunities for scholarship and provides a growing range of higher education specific CPD. Some initiatives, for example those designed to disseminate good practice, require further development.

4.13 The action plan within the Strategic Plan and the Higher Education Strategy demonstrates some of the depth of embedding of enhancement, together with appropriate curriculum developments and the strategic oversight by senior management teams.

4.14 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of a range of documentation, including the College Strategic Plan, the Higher Education Strategy, and a range of strategic committee meeting minutes. The team also held meetings with senior and academic staff (including an awarding body representative), professional support staff, students, employers and alumni.

4.15 Enhancement is considered an essential element of higher education at the College. There is a clear understanding about the nature of enhancement at all levels of management, academic and support services staff, and among employers and alumni that the review team met. The team confirmed that employer links and employability are strengths of the higher education programmes. Employers reinforced this by their similar enthusiasm, talking enthusiastically about their understanding of enhancement in not only programme design but in their engagement with ASIC as members of the Operational Steering Group. This cooperation is notable in the developments, such as the ASIC, which are aligned to the LEP strategic priorities and to identified regional skills needs, and which aim to enhance currency, progression from level 3 to higher education and potential future employment. The actions taken to enhance students' learning opportunities through the alignment of programmes to strategic local and regional employment needs is **good practice**.

4.16 There are other established proactive links with employers in all programme areas, whose staff make good use of this invaluable experience. This ranges from involvement in programme approvals and audition panels (where written feedback is provided to students), to guest talks, volunteer and part-time work experience, and invitations for students to attend industry lectures.

4.17 HETLEG is explicitly tasked with disseminating and discussing best practice, including that highlighted in peer observations. The review team found that, as yet, the use of the online 'Thinking Allowed' resource, intended to be the vehicle for sharing of best practice, remains underdeveloped.

4.18 The College higher education committees are supported and informed by less formal subcommittees, notably an operational group for the new ASIC build that includes students, employers and a degree-awarding body representative.

4.19 There is clear evidence that students are involved directly with the quality assurance of their programmes. Not only are the SSCCs a focus for student feedback, but ongoing discussions with tutors and the use of end-of-module/unit evaluations to shape curriculum developments is a helpful contribution in addition to student surveys and questionnaires. Students met by the team are very clear that they are well prepared for employment.

4.20 This overall ethos is explicitly threaded throughout the College higher education strategies, policies and practice, underpinning the operational infrastructure that supports enhancement in many aspects of the student experience. Staff, in all meetings, spoke enthusiastically and knowledgeably about a variety of ways that they have introduced enhancement activities, including some examples in the variety of assessments and productive employer engagement in programme developments. The widely embedded strategic approach to activities that enhance current and potential students' employability is **good practice**.

4.21 Although some of these initiatives at local programme level are in their early stages of either development or embedding into common practice, others are clearly part of the College Higher Education Strategy and are impacting positively on the student learning experience.

4.22 The review team confirms the approach taken by the College to enhancing its provision methodically over a planned three-year period to fulfil its Higher Education Strategy and overall mission statement. The structures and range of information systematically considered by the higher education committees confirm that the College takes strategic deliberate steps to enhance its provision. 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

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

4.24 There is one Expectation in this judgement area, which is met and which is considered to present low risk. There are no recommendations and no affirmations in this judgement area.

4.25 The College has systems to identify and disseminate good practice and to make use of review mechanisms to identify opportunities for improvement. A range of enhancement initiatives is ongoing and there are examples of good practice in this area. The review team particularly highlighted good practice in the widely embedded strategic approach to activities that enhance current and potential student employability; and the actions taken to enhance students' learning opportunities through the alignment of programmes to strategic local and regional employment needs.

4.26 The review team considers that further embedding of processes for the sharing of good practice across the higher education provision, for example through further development of the 'Thinking Allowed' resource, would further strengthen the approach to enhancement at the College.

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

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 Employability is at the core of the higher education provision at the College. There is a clear strategic aim to enhance student employability opportunities in the area, where there is an acknowledged lack of higher level skills. The College's Strategic Plan and the Higher Education Strategy note the intention to 'Close the skills gap between the local population and the needs of employers'. As a consequence, the College sees employability as being of strategic importance to its curriculum planning.

5.2 Strong relationships exist with employers within the area served by the College, and there are a range of mechanisms by which employers are involved in the provision. Employers are involved in programme design, validation activity and assessment, as well as providing opportunities for work-based learning and placement activities.

5.3 The College is proud of the extent to which employers have been involved in the design and development of programmes and how employability is embedded. Employability is the focus of specific units within the curriculum of all foundation degrees, as well as being a focus of overall transferable skill development. Reports from programme validation processes include a number of positive references to employability related activity, including the 'innovative nature of the programme and focus on employability and industry needs'; the 'development of a programme that meets local demographic and employment needs'; the 'excellent connections with local employers'; and the 'breadth of the programme to be commended as it will support students entering different employment roles'.

5.4 Employers provide placements on some programmes and a wide range of other work-based learning opportunities on other programmes. Employers provide opportunities for students to undertake live projects, provide guest speakers and attend open days. Some students are employed when they commence their studies, with a number being sponsored by their employers to complete the programmes. The College is not complacent and is committed to further expanding this activity by sharing good practice and further developing an environment in which employability is a key focus.

5.5 The strategic relationship with employers informed the bid and subsequent development of the ASIC. This will house teaching activity and will include specialist facilities to support its creative, digital and engineering provision, and a business school and incubation spaces. It will also serve to support knowledge exchange between local industry and higher education provision. The Employer Liaison Group for ASIC is intended to maintain and guide the employability focus, the stated key driver for this building, which is due to become operational in April 2017.

5.6 The overall finding is that the College has a clear strategy and effective practices for developing employability across all aspects of its higher education provision. That the integration of employability across the provision is effective is evidenced by the DLHE survey. There is a good upward trend in employability: in 2013-14, 97 per cent of the students had progressed into employment or further study.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 30 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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