



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Waltham International College Ltd

Partial Re-review

June 2017

Contents

About this review	1
Key findings	2
Judgements	2
Recommendations	2
About the provider	3
Explanation of findings	4
1 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities	4
2 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities	18
Glossary	20

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) partial review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Waltham International College Ltd. The review took place on 13 June 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Ann Read
- Mr Christopher Mabika.

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

This was a partial review following an original review undertaken in November 2016, which resulted in a [published report](#). The QAA review team made judgements on two areas requiring improvement: the quality of student learning opportunities and the quality of the information about learning opportunities.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

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

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)² and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ 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 QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

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

- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Recommendations

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

By November 2017:

- clarify the complaints policy to ensure that an individual member of staff is not involved in more than one stage of the complaints procedure (Expectation B9).

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

About the provider

Waltham International College Ltd (the College) is a small alternative provider of further and higher education programmes based in Barking, East London. The College has been operational since 2010; initially based in Birmingham under the title of Innovative School of Business Management, it changed name and location in 2012 and 2015 respectively. At the time of the review, the College has seven students registered on higher education programmes.

The College does not have its own degree awarding powers and offers programmes under agreements with awarding organisations. The College delivered higher education programmes between 2011 and 2013 and restarted its higher education provision in April 2014 with the introduction of a level 4/5 Higher National Certificate/Diploma in Business approved by Pearson Education. A Pearson level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (EDSML) was approved for delivery from September 2015. A new level 5 Diploma in Education and Training (DET) with FutureQuals was approved in 2016, although has yet to be offered.

The College mission, strategic direction and management structure is unchanged since the previous review. In addition to the Principal, the College has three core staff members who constitute the Senior Management Team, namely the Registrar, Academic Manager and Director of Curriculum and Quality. The latter two also comprise the main teaching team for higher education programmes, although temporary part-time lecturers are recruited when required. Since the last review, there has been a change of personnel in the role of Director of Curriculum and Quality. Higher education provision at the College is managed and overseen separately from further education programmes.

The College produced a detailed action plan to address the recommendations made at the QAA review in November 2016 and has closely monitored progress in implementing the actions identified. Changes have been made to the governance structure, including revisions to the timing, operation and terms of reference for committees. The highest academic authority for higher education remains the Academic Board, under which now sits three formally defined academic bodies: Programme Boards, Assessment and Standardisation Boards and Student Staff Liaison Committees. The College has also undertaken substantial revisions to the policy framework to respond to the recommendations from the last review.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

1 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

1.1 The College's programme approval responsibilities focus on the strategic decision on whether to enter into an application process with an awarding organisation, and which programmes and optional units to offer. The awarding organisation is therefore responsible for the design and development of programmes. The College's approach to the presentation, consideration and internal approval of programmes is outlined in its Policy for Programme, Approval, Review and Cessation, which was revised and approved by the Academic Board in March 2017.

1.2 In the new process, a programme, module or pathway proposal may be initiated by any member of staff. The Senior Management Team (SMT) decides whether to proceed with commissioning market research and establishing a group with internal, student and external representation to develop a formal proposal. The SMT will review and recommend approval to continue, reject or request additional information. If approved by the SMT the proposal is considered by the Academic Board before a formal application is made to the awarding organisation. The Academic Manager provides regular updates to both the SMT and Academic Board. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of the process by reviewing documentation pertaining to programme approval. The team also spoke to staff regarding the programme approval process.

1.4 The revised policy has not yet been used, as there have been no new programme applications, periodic reviews or withdrawal of programmes since the last review. The revised process is clear and now includes potential for student and external involvement and a focus on employability and transferable skills. The policy is generally robust in terms of the documentation requirements and overall procedures, however, while arrangements for course withdrawal are included in the policy, the process for the formal suspension of courses is not and does not appear to be documented elsewhere. The respective responsibilities of the deliberative and executive functions have been revised so that the SMT has final approval of any proposals and the Academic Board performs a checking function, making recommendations to the SMT. Given that the College does not design the academic content of programmes, differentiation between the consideration undertaken by the Academic Board and SMT is currently limited.

1.5 Based on the revised policy and the currently limited scope of College responsibilities, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.6 The policies governing recruitment, selection and admission of students are outlined in a series of documents and are in accordance with the awarding organisation requirements. The Director of Curriculum and Quality annually reviews the policies relating to admissions, which are ultimately approved by the Academic Board. Admissions information is made available to prospective students on the website and also provided on enquiry. Informal consultations are offered to potential applicants to discuss the nature of programmes and possible progression routes. All applicants are interviewed and undertake an initial assessment to establish their suitability and English language skills before being registered with the awarding organisation. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.7 The review team scrutinised the admissions policy and supporting documents and held meetings with staff to determine the effectiveness of the approach. In addition, the team met students to discuss their experience of the recruitment and admissions process.

1.8 The recruitment, selection and admissions policies are formulated in line with Supporting Professionalism in Admissions good practice guidance. The College has recently reviewed and updated aspects of the admissions policy framework, including the Appeals Against Admission Decisions Policy, the Admission Form and the Equality and Diversity Policy. Following recommendations from the awarding organisation, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy had also been reviewed to ensure appropriate assurances on the validity and origin of submitted evidence. Both the Academic Board and Assessment and Standardisation Boards have standing agenda items to consider RPL decisions, although no applications have been received to date.

1.9 Information for applicants, including course information and entry requirements, is clearly available on the College website. Students met by the review team had attended an interview and induction workshop, at which information relating to awarding organisation expectations, attendance and assessment requirements was made available. Student handbooks and programme specifications are provided during induction and on the College virtual learning environment. The recent Academic Management Review report from the awarding organisation confirms that selection and recruitment processes are effective and no issues with admissions have been raised by the external verifier. The awarding organisation report also confirms that the College has responded to previous recommendations and made necessary and sufficient changes to the RPL process.

1.10 Although there have been no new applicants since the last review, the recruitment, selection and admission procedures in place are sound. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

1.11 The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy underpins the College learning and teaching approach, and is overseen by the Director of Curriculum and Quality. Student handbooks describe the teaching methods applied to each programme and the associated delivery plans. The approach involves lesson observations, staff development and appraisals, student attendance monitoring, student tutorials and policies for assessment and learning resources. A Student Engagement Policy outlines the process for student attendance and for supporting those at risk of non-completion of their studies. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team scrutinised documents related to teaching and learning and materials available through the virtual learning environment. In addition, the review team met teaching staff and students during the visit.

1.13 The teaching, learning and assessment processes have been recently revised in line with the College enhancement plan to incorporate external speakers and visits, a 'flipped classroom' approach and increased use of business games. The Staff Development Policy and Staff Appraisal Policy have also been revisited and changes made to the lesson and peer observation policies to include the opportunity for students to participate as observers. A Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Policy has been put in place in response to an essential recommendation from the awarding organisation, and external reports confirm that this has been satisfactorily addressed and implemented. Students are informed of teaching approaches through student handbooks, and relevant policies are outlined as part of recruitment and induction, and through involvement in College committees.

1.14 Staff observations are graded, with low performance being discussed at staff appraisals, although to date all staff teaching on higher education programmes have received satisfactory grades. The staff observation form allows for the identification of developmental needs and for action plans to be prepared. In addition to observations, academic staff are required to undertake CPD activities and are encouraged to become fellows of the Higher Education Academy. The College has plans to amend job descriptions to reflect the requirement for staff to maintain CPD records, although this is yet to be implemented. The recent Academic Board meeting confirmed that the expectation on CPD records is fully documented and a central log of CPD activity is now maintained.

1.15 Programme Boards are responsible for implementing and monitoring teaching and learning approaches and review all areas of provision. Information on the quality of teaching and assessment is available through the internal verification processes and through student feedback. Students met by the review team confirm that module feedback forms and Student Staff Liaison Committees provide opportunities to feedback on teaching, with clear examples of actions being taken to address any issues raised. The most recent external verifier reports confirm that all staff are appropriately experienced, vocationally qualified and hold recognised teaching qualifications.

1.16 The College has effective arrangements for articulating learning opportunities and teaching practices, and appropriate review arrangements are 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

1.17 Support arrangements for students are detailed in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and in associated policies that govern the student experience, such as the policies on student attendance, equality and diversity, student tutorials, learning resources and assessment. In particular, the College has introduced a new Student Tutorial Policy that clarifies the academic support arrangements available to students and a revised Equality and Diversity Policy that stipulates the progression measures in place. Students are made aware of the support available during their studies through student handbooks. Data on admission, retention, achievement and progression are monitored through the annual review cycle. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team tested the effectiveness of the approach by scrutinising relevant documentation, including committee minutes and external reports. In addition, the review team met students and staff during the visit to discuss the support arrangements in place.

1.19 Admission and induction processes allow for the recruitment of students that are capable of succeeding, and initial admissions tests are used effectively to determine any specific support needs. Students met by the review team confirmed that induction was helpful in highlighting progression opportunities, the support arrangements in place and the career advice available.

1.20 The Student Tutorial Policy enables individual development requirements to be established, and for the assignment of Progress and Performance Tutors to provide ongoing academic guidance and support. The College has also introduced a new Individual Plan for Academic Success (IPAS) system to support students at risk of academic failure. This approach enables students to formally receive extra support and to monitor their own progress. Students on the IPAS programme confirmed that the support received was helpful and encouraged self-reflection.

1.21 Student progress is discussed at Academic Board and Programme Board meetings, and statistical information is overseen through the annual monitoring process. External reports from the awarding organisation confirm that appropriate central records of student achievement are maintained and that retention and progression rates are high.

1.22 The virtual learning environment provides a repository for information, a communication channel and a means for students to submit assessments and receive feedback. All students are trained in the use of the virtual learning environment and those met confirmed that it was a helpful resource. The College provides an on-site computer laboratory and a small library. External verifier reports confirm that physical resources in the College are adequate for their purpose and that students receive adequate support.

1.23 The College has effective arrangements for the provision and review of resources. 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

1.24 The College has approved a revised Student Engagement Policy, which formalises its definition of student engagement. The new Policy sets out the College expectations in terms of attendance, use of the virtual learning environment, submission of work and tutorial support. The College also seeks student feedback on its provision and services, and student involvement in decision making, and provides opportunities for students to shape their learning experiences. A student representative handbook outlines the role for students, including participation in meetings such as new Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of the arrangements to engage students by examining documentation including relevant policies, minutes of meetings, evaluation forms and action plans. In addition, the team met staff and students, including student representatives, to discuss the approach.

1.26 The new Student Engagement Policy focuses on improving the motivation of students to engage in learning, rather than on providing opportunities for student to be involved in quality enhancement and assurance processes. Nevertheless, the College does provide a range of opportunities for students to engage in educational enhancement and assurance activities through feedback mechanisms, inclusion in a new programme approval group, and revised terms of reference for committees. Greater opportunities for student involvement are now provided, although these are still in the process of being fully implemented.

1.27 Two student representatives have been elected by peers and have received satisfactory information and training for their role. Students met by the team were enthusiastic about SSLC discussions, reporting that issues raised at these meetings were promptly addressed by the College. Student representation has been strengthened on committees, with students attending the Academic Board and Programme Boards, although the terms of reference for these do not make clear that students are not full members and only attend for some items. Student representatives are involved in reviewing internal and external monitoring reports at committees, although they are not actively involved in other agenda items in which they may have a legitimate interest, such as feedback from other committees, public information or formal decisions on new policies.

1.28 The College continues to have a strong relationship with students, seeking their view informally during class contact time, posting messages for feedback on the virtual learning environment, and issuing formal end-of-module surveys. The outcomes from the feedback collected is presented verbally at SSLC meetings and feeds into the annual review process. External reports from the awarding organisation and external verifiers are made available to students via the virtual learning environment, although the students met by the review team were not aware of the College's response to these reports.

1.29 The College has effective measures to elicit student views and to enable student input into quality assurance processes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.30 The College retains responsibility for the setting, marking and internal verification of assessments in accordance with awarding organisation requirements. Assessment and Standardisation Boards are convened to discuss and agree outcomes, and the awarding organisation maintains oversight of assessment practices through external verifiers and the Academic Management Review process. The College is also responsible for assessing claims and awarding credit under its RPL Policy.

1.31 The College has streamlined its assessment documentation and processes. A new Assessment Policy covers the top level arrangements for assessment design and internal verification, marking, extenuating circumstances, feedback, and academic malpractice. The previous boards for assessment have been merged into a single board. More detailed processes have been refined, including new policies on malpractice and academic misconduct policy, student tutorials and academic appeals. The College has also formalised its arrangements for students at risk of academic failure through the introduction of Individual Plans for Academic Success. The arrangements in place would therefore enable the Expectation to be met.

1.32 The review team tested how responsibilities for assessment are discharged by examining relevant policies and procedures, external verifier reports and minutes of assessment meetings. The review team also held meetings with staff and students to discuss experiences of assessment.

1.33 The assessment concerns raised by the previous QAA review and the awarding organisation's 2016 Academic Management Review have been addressed satisfactorily, and recent external verifier reports describe the assessment process as accurate and fair. The new streamlined policies and procedures are clear and more suitable to the size of cohort. The recent merging of the standardisation and assessment boards has the potential to be effective and the arrangements for assessment design, marking and verification are working satisfactorily.

1.34 Students met by the review team were positive about the support provided by staff in preparing for assessment, including the new tutorial arrangements, formative feedback approach, and general assessment arrangements. Although the assessment policy states that late submission of work is not accepted, the policy does not explain that late submission of work is treated as a non-submission and that any subsequent submission is therefore subject to a mark cap and an additional fee. While the policy may not be comprehensive in this regard, these arrangements are explained in the student handbook and by flow diagrams displayed on classroom notice boards, with students being aware of these arrangements.

1.35 The assessment processes for design, marking and feedback at the College are appropriate, and students are adequately supported to demonstrate learning through assessment. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that 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

1.36 The awarding organisation defines the role of the external verifier and is responsible for appointment, induction and training. The external verifier undertakes standards verification by sampling assessment briefs and student work, examining feedback to students, and considering assessment board minutes. The College has updated its processes and committee terms of reference to ensure students are involved in reviewing external verifier reports, and recording and tracking actions arising from reports. The arrangements in place would therefore enable the Expectation to be met.

1.37 The review team explored the effectiveness of the approach by considering relevant documentation including external verifier reports, internal action plans and monitoring arrangements. The review team also met staff and students to discuss the role of external verifiers.

1.38 A new external verifier was appointed in January 2017. Students met by the review team were aware of the role of the external verifier and confirmed that they had met them as part of the annual site visit. The non-confidential part of external verifier reports, but not the action plans, are available on the virtual learning environment, although students' awareness of these reports is low. However, the reports and action plans are presented to the Academic Board, at which students representatives are in attendance.

1.39 The College has addressed fully the external verifier recommendations contained in the 2015-16 reports, and is in the process of addressing the most recent external verifier recommendations, which will be reported on as part of the routine annual review cycle.

1.40 The College gives serious attention to the external examining process and takes prompt and appropriate action. 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

1.41 The awarding organisation conducts an Academic Management Review to assure the presence and consistency of quality management in its approved centres. The College is required to produce a Centre Engagement Report to inform this process, reviewing and reflecting on its academic provision. In accordance with awarding organisation requirements, the College also has its own annual monitoring arrangements, which it has recently updated, including a change. As part of this internal process, Programme Leaders draft an annual monitoring and review document, which is signed off by the Director of Curriculum and Quality. The associated action plan is monitored by the Programme Board, which reports to the Academic Board.

1.42 All programmes are subject to periodic review and re-evaluation, although no programme has yet reached the stage for this process to be applied. While the Academic Board is responsible for the periodic review process, the SMT takes the strategic decision, in principle, on the continuation, modification or withdraw of programmes. For continuing programmes, a detailed proposal is considered by the Academic Board, which makes recommendations on approval to the SMT. Discontinuation of programmes follows a similar process. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.43 The review team tested the approach by scrutinising the available documentation, including internal and external monitoring reports produced to date, and by discussing the arrangements with staff and students during the visit.

1.44 The 2015-16 internal annual monitoring process was concluded through the presentation of annual monitoring reports to the Academic Board in December 2016. Following this, the College changed the name of the process to avoid confusion with the awarding organisation process, although the policy has yet to be formally revised to reflect the new nomenclature. The College action plan identifies a number of actions to strengthen the process of annual monitoring, including making more explicit the links with enhancement and allowing greater student involvement. In addition, the review team was informed that data is now collected contemporaneously and discussed when appropriate. The internal reporting and evaluation for the 2016 -17 academic year will not formally commence until August 2017 and therefore the effectiveness of the new approach is as yet untested.

1.45 The awarding organisation conducted its Academic Management Review process in January 2017. The subsequent external report was positive, confirming that the essential actions from the previous year had been satisfactorily completed and identifying six essential actions for 2017. The College immediately developed an action plan to address the issues identified, which was completed and approved by the awarding organisation.

1.46 The College is implementing appropriate procedures for programme monitoring and review and is managing its responsibilities effectively. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.47 The College has a revised Students Complaints Policy and Procedure and Students Appeals Policy and Procedure, and has amended terms of reference for the Academic Board to ensure annual monitoring of the pattern of student complaints and academic appeals.

1.48 The Students Complaints Policy and Procedure outlines a three-stage process that includes an informal stage, a formal stage and an appeals stage. Wherever possible, the College aims to informally address student concerns about programmes and services. To this end, the Policy encourages students to address complaints with their tutor or another member of staff at the earliest stage. The College also offers multiple opportunities for students to feedback on their experience prior to making a complaint and has a complaint/suggestion box that allows issues to be submitted and considered on a weekly basis.

1.49 The Student Appeals Policy and Procedure outlines a four-stage process, with an initial conciliation stage with the Programme Leader, a second stage where the appeal is considered by the Director of Curriculum and Quality and the internal verifier, a third stage where an appeal can be considered by the Academic Board, and a final stage where a student can appeal to the awarding organisation.

1.50 The review team scrutinised the complaints and appeals policies and convened meetings with staff and students to discuss awareness and the potential effectiveness of the approach.

1.51 Students met by the review team demonstrated a basic understanding of the complaints policy and were aware of how to access additional information. Students confirmed that the complaint policy is visibly represented through flow charts in classrooms. A complaints log is in place to enable the SMT and Academic Board to routinely oversee the type and nature of complaints, although to date no formal complaints have been received.

1.52 The Students Complaints Policy and Procedure outlines the stages of complaint consideration and specifies which staff are involved in each stage. At the formal stage, the Academic Manager or Registrar conducts an initial investigation resulting in a recommendation to the Principal to proceed or dismiss. Students wishing to progress to the appeal stage have their claim initially considered by the Principal, who can uphold the original decision or instruct a case review by the Complaints Review Panel, which consists of the Director of Curriculum and Quality and the Academic Manager. While the stages of the process are clear, the Policy allows for both the Academic Manager and the Principal to be involved in more than one stage of the process, thereby potentially placing them in positions where they are required to review their own decisions and where independence is compromised. The review team **recommends** that the College clarify the complaints policy to ensure that an individual member of staff is not involved in more than one stage of the complaints procedure.

1.53 Students met by the review team demonstrate an awareness and basic understanding of the Students Appeals Policy and Procedure, which is available on the virtual learning environment and on flowcharts placed in classrooms. The Policy states that appeals will follow a formal, recorded process and the stages are clearly outlined, including recourse to the awarding organisation when internal processes are exhausted, although this process has yet to be tested as no appeals have been submitted to date.

1.54 The policies for complaints and appeals at the College are generally clear and understood by staff and students, although greater clarification is required to ensure that independence and fairness is protected at all stage of the complaints process. Overall, 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

1.55 The College does not currently have any arrangements whereby the delivery of learning opportunities are delegated to others and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

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

1.56 The College does not offer any research degrees and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

1.58 All relevant Expectations in this section are met and the associated level of risk is considered to be low in all cases.

1.59 The College has taken appropriate steps to address the issues identified in the previous review, and the current policy and management framework provide a sound basis for managing the quality of student learning opportunities. Some aspects of the revised arrangements, such as the new approach to programme approval, annual monitoring and the revised policies on complaints and appeals, have not yet been tested in practice, as no circumstances have arisen to enable implementation. However, progress in other areas, and the greater clarity and coherence presented in the policy framework, gives confidence that the new approaches have the potential to be effective in practice.

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

2 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

2.1 The information published by the College for internal and external stakeholders is underpinned by a Published Information Policy, which outlines the responsibilities for documentation approval. A Published Information Audit is undertaken annually, which now extends beyond the website to cover all published information and results in an action plan, overseen by the Academic Board. The College has established a formal executive committee, the Publication Committee, to take responsibility for overseeing issues pertaining to published information and has a clearer policy framework for internal information. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.2 The review team tested the effectiveness of the approach by scrutinising information for stakeholders including that for prospective students, current students and internal staff. In addition, the review team met staff and students for views on the quality of information.

2.3 Prospective students are provided with detailed information on the College website and e-prospectus. Clear information is available to potential applicants through the Admission Process Flow Diagram, including the structure, fees and duration of the course. Students met by the review team confirmed that admissions information was available on the website and through an information pack. The secure section of the virtual learning environment contains all policies and procedures, programme handbooks and teaching materials, and students confirmed that relevant information had been brought to their attention through the induction process.

2.4 The Director of Curriculum and Quality is responsible for the approval of external information relating to education provision to ensure it is fit for purpose, accurate and current. Where the information is produced by the Director of Curriculum and Quality, the Academic Manager or Registrar performs this checking function. Teaching staff are required to post module information on the virtual learning environment at the start of the programme, which is subject to periodic checks by the Academic Manager.

2.5 The framework of policies has been reviewed and streamlined to ensure greater consistency and clarity. A more coherent framework for categorising and reviewing policies has also been introduced. The College notifies students about the change in policies through the virtual learning environment and discusses changes at the Academic Board, attended by both students and staff. Staff reported that information is checked through the Publication Committee prior to release and that the College now makes its own changes to the website internally, rather than through an outsourcing arrangement. A Published Information Audit was carried out in February 2017 and the resulting report was discussed by the Academic Board with all identified issues being addressed in an action plan.

2.6 The approach to managing information at the College is clearly articulated and generally sound. 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

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

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

2.9 Considerable changes have been made to the policy and procedure framework to ensure greater consistency, clarity and fitness for purpose in light of the scale of the higher education provision. The College has a sound approach to verifying and checking the accuracy of information, and greater attention is paid to ensure that all types of information for internal and external stakeholders is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

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

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 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) 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.

Awarding organisation

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Self-evaluation document

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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