



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd

March 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd. The review took place from 15 to 16 March 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Mandy Hobart
- Mr Christopher McIntyre.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd 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 (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
- 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 check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

In reviewing West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd 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.

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 5.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.³ A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).⁴ 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 (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd.

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

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd.

- The strategic, professional and practice-led approach to teaching, which is effectively supported by ongoing research and development (Expectation B3).
- The excellent, discipline-specific and professionally informed use of resources in both formal learning spaces and the wider institution to promote high quality education (Expectation B4).
- The strategic, professional, well supported and thoroughly embedded approach to the provision of effective work placements (Expectation B10).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The work being undertaken by the College to improve the timing and quality of summative feedback (Expectation B6).

Theme: Student Employability

West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd promotes the employability skills of its students effectively and enables them to develop relevant employability skills in a unique environment.

The College works closely with stakeholders to ensure that its provision supports students' readiness for employment. Students are very positive about their experience of work placement, visits to professional environments and of visiting lecturers.

There is a strong professional network at the College, and staff have a good understanding of what it means to be a professional. This contributes to the high employability record of the College and its high standing in the world of creative arts and conservation.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd has satisfactorily completed the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

About West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd

West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd (the College) is a self-supporting and privately funded college that has full partnership status with the University of Sussex (the University). The College reported a full-time equivalent of 66.5 higher education students on programmes at levels 6 and 7 validated by the University enrolled in the 2014-15 academic year. Twelve students also studied on the non-accredited West Dean College Diploma courses. Teaching is delivered by five full-time tutors and 10 part-time tutors across nine subject areas. To complement this provision, some 60 visiting lecturers are employed each year. Success rates are high, with most courses achieving 100 per cent retention and completion in the last four years. Teaching takes place in historic buildings on a single campus within the South Downs National Park, near Chichester in West Sussex.

The College is part of the Edward James Foundation (the Foundation), an educational charitable trust, whose mission is to 'Provide the highest quality education in creative arts and conservation and be internationally recognised as a centre of excellence'. In order to pursue this mission, the College offers a number of specialised programmes under the umbrella of the Schools of Creative Arts (Painting and Drawing, Tapestry, Sculpture, Creative Writing and Musical Instrument Making) and Conservation (Clocks, Furniture, Books, Metalwork and Ceramics).

The College currently offers a range of full-time higher education programmes that lead to graduate diplomas, postgraduate diplomas, master's (MA) degrees and a master of fine arts degree. From this academic year a full-time foundation degree is being offered for the first time, intended to eventually replace the non-validated West Dean College courses, which have been offered for several decades; a new MA in Creative Writing and Publishing is also being delivered on a block (part-time) basis.

In parallel with the validated courses, the College offers a significant programme of specialist non-accredited short courses. There are currently approximately 700 short courses in subjects ranging from drawing, ceramics and sculpture to music and gardening, jewellery-making and textiles, which are delivered throughout the year by some 300 visiting tutors of short courses, of whom many are leading practitioners in their field.

In 2012 the College was re-recognised as an affiliated partner of the University and was awarded 'full partner' status for a further five years to the end of June 2017.

Since the QAA Review for Educational Oversight carried out in February 2012 the College has undergone major organisational restructuring that has seen the previous position of the Principal replaced by that of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who oversees the entirety of the Foundation's diverse activities on a day-to-day basis. Reporting to the CEO are the Director of Education and the Director of Hospitality. Along with the CEO they form the College's Executive Team, with responsibility for the strategic and operational management of the College.

The College states that it faces a few major challenges, such as:

- the natural limits placed on student numbers by the physical restrictions of the campus, and the style and ethos of teaching
- the regulatory environment and restrictions on international recruitment
- increased competition from European and international providers.

Since its last review, the College has received three annual monitoring visits by QAA in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and was found to be making acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the 2012 Review at all of these visits. The College has addressed all recommendations from that Review. It has further articulated and developed its Teaching and Learning Strategy, improved information and guidance on work placements, and expanded the provision of online teaching and learning information and materials.

Explanation of the findings about West Dean College - The Edward James Foundation Ltd

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* 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 has a partnership with the University of Sussex (the University) that ensures that it maintains appropriate academic standards. The University is responsible for setting and maintaining the standards of the awards through validation, and oversees this through the use of external examiners, annual monitoring and periodic review.

1.2 The Academic Board is the deliberative body with responsibility for the standards and quality of academic programmes internally; the Academic Quality Committee is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of standards and the quality of academic programmes on a day-to-day basis. The College aims to ensure that its qualifications and the associated learning outcomes are clearly aligned to the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). All validated programmes of study comply with both College-wide generic learning outcomes and individual programme-level learning outcomes.

1.3 The College secures academic standards through annual monitoring and course re-validation, and through the participation of external examiners in the assessment process. It works closely with the University through the terms of its Memorandum of Agreement to undertake these quality processes.

1.4 The College has developed a standardised set of documentation to support the validation of new programmes consisting of an overview of the course development process, a staffing plan, an assessment mapping and a benchmarking statement.

1.5 The College refers to and ensures alignment with the Subject Benchmark Statements for bachelor's degree qualifications, where appropriate, and the qualification descriptors for master's and foundation degrees in archaeology, art and design, history of art, architecture and design. Evidence of Subject Benchmark Statements mapping against the programme learning outcomes is provided in the programme benchmark statement, as part of the new course documentation considered by the validation panel.

1.6 The levels and titles of College programmes conform to QAA expectations of naming conventions and are consistent with expectations for the use of higher education qualifications in the sector to assist public understanding of achievements. Qualifications start at foundation degree (level 4), rising to master's awards (level 7), and the College keeps under review how each level delivered relates to those above and below it. Programmes in the School of Conservation follow Institute of Conservation and Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers standards; this is seen as affirming the importance to the College of students being able to transition with relative ease into professional roles on completion of their programmes of study.

1.7 The balance of the responsibilities between the awarding body and the College, the local guidance on and operation of the regulatory framework, institutional and staff ownership of the processes, and the maturity of the partnership would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.8 The review team tested the Expectation by talking to staff and examining documentation, particularly the Generic Document, which sets out the quality framework that informs programme approval and monitoring procedures. The team also tested this by reviewing portfolio, course development, approval and validation information.

1.9 There are effective mechanisms in place for the setting and maintenance of academic standards, supported by the relationship with the University. The College was re-recognised as an affiliated partner of the University in 2012 and was awarded 'Full Partner' status for a further five years until the end of June 2017.

1.10 In June 2014 the entire portfolio underwent periodic review and all six graduate diplomas, six postgraduate diplomas, two master's degrees and the Master of Fine Art were revalidated for five years. In the course of the University's review the portfolio was subjected to external benchmarking and consideration of the student voice as part of engagement with key stakeholders.

1.11 The review team heard from staff and students about the effectiveness of the relationship with the University and the means by which the Academic Board and CEO maintain overview of processes. The team also heard from staff about their engagement through appropriate academic quality processes with the University; their work in aligning provision to the appropriate level through use of external benchmarks during the processes of programme development and design; and about mapping activity undertaken during the recent full portfolio review. Staff are aware of the significance of the deliberative structure and felt that the committee structure was robust and effective, and involved staff and students in the cyclical processes for the management of standards and enhancement. Students the team met were aware of the use of the College Generic Document, had noted changes to it, and confirmed their involvement in the College committees and validation activity.

1.12 The review team found that the College fulfils its requirements to work within the parameters and guidelines of its partner. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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 College has confidence that its regulatory academic framework is supported by published principles and procedures that are a reliable basis for consistency in the award of academic credit. The University validates taught programmes of study, oversees and regulates the assessment of student work, oversees and approves the appointment of external examiners, and confirms final awards; these processes are evaluated through annual monitoring. The College is responsible for the administration, management, delivery and internal review of its validated academic programmes.

1.14 The College has a Generic Document that details a range of strategies and policies across the student lifecycle. These form a transparent and comprehensive academic framework supporting the academic standards that lead to the awards by the University. The College has developed its own academic regulations aligned to those of the University, which has recognised that the College's practice-based programmes require some specific regulations and academic processes distinct from more traditional programmes. The College uses the University's regulatory framework as the first point of reference when regulations are being reviewed and developed for the validation of new, or the modification of extant, programmes. Amendments to the College's regulations are incorporated and subject to strict version control.

1.15 There is internal monitoring of assessment procedures, and external examiners are required to formally confirm that the manner in which the assessment process has taken place has been appropriate. External examiners' reports are highly valued as indicators of meeting sector benchmarks for academic standards and for monitoring the fairness and consistency of College assessment processes. All course documents set out unit descriptors, learning outcomes and assignment requirements, and are available to all students through the student intranet. Students receive thorough briefing on assessment principles at the start of each academic year during induction.

1.16 The College has a comprehensive committee structure to manage oversight of standards and quality, with the Academic Board holding executive responsibility. The Academic Board has oversight of new programmes, the monitoring of curriculum delivery and the nomination of external examiners for approval by the University. The Academic Quality Committee, the Research Committee, and the Teaching and Learning Forum advise the Academic Board. The Academic Quality Committee considers external examiner reports and the outcomes of Programme Annual Monitoring; nominates external examiners to the Academic Board; and scrutinises the Annual Monitoring Report. The Research Committee reviews research activity and the Teaching and Learning Forum reviews policies relating to learning, teaching and assessments. School boards have responsibility for reviewing the academic management and delivery of programmes. All committees have at least one student representative; school boards have up to five student representatives.

1.17 The committee and regulatory environment is clearly defined and operates in an appropriate manner. The Generic Document, and supporting strategy and policy material, support the work of the College in establishing transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications.

The College keeps this material under review and intends to review the Generic Document format to safeguard future effectiveness. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team tested this Expectation by examining documentation, in particular: the Generic Document and regulations; the committee operation and sample minutes, which detail a range of strategies and policies for programmes, admissions, teaching and learning, assessment, programme monitoring and quality assurance, pastoral and welfare provision, learning resources and staffing; and additional policies on student complaints and academic appeals, student attendance, and work placement.

1.19 The review team met staff and students. In these meetings the team heard from academic and support staff and students about their engagement with, and use of, the Generic Document. Staff felt that there was a robust committee structure under the Academic Board, with student involvement and a cyclical process for standards and enhancement. Students confirmed that they understood the use of the Generic Document, were clear about the regulations, policies and procedures, that they were able to contribute to their development, and that they were aware that students are engaged in representation.

1.20 The academic frameworks and regulations established at the College to govern the award academic credit and qualifications are appropriately designed and effectively used, and engage staff and students 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 (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

1.21 The College maintains a definitive record of each programme validated by the University. On approval of a programme, the final approved course document, complete with learning outcomes and the details of how credits are distributed, is lodged with the partnerships section within the University's Academic Development and Quality Enhancement Office. The College Academic Office maintains accurate records and definitive version control of all programme documents, including the Generic Document. The Academic Office ensures that these documents are available to staff and students, who are made aware of any approved changes.

1.22 Programme specifications are standardised and include: the programme aims, learning outcomes, alignment to external reference points, programme structure, distinctive learning features, learning and teaching methods and strategy, practical experience, assessment methods and strategy, student support, information and resources, methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of learning, unit descriptors and staff CVs. Unit descriptors state the unit aims, learning outcomes, attribution of credits, course content and assessment requirements for each unit. They are available to all staff and students on the student intranet.

1.23 All programmes are subject to re-validation/periodic review by the University every five years; the College's entire academic portfolio was revalidated in June 2014 when all course documents were reviewed. The College's Academic Office keeps records of awards to students in compliance with the data protection guidance and with its legal obligations to protect records from unauthorised access, and supplies specific information when requested. The Registry maintains the student's formal academic record, including grade profiles awarded in line with agreements with the University. As part of the annual monitoring process, aggregated data relating to pass rates and levels of awards are communicated in a reflective review of the examination process within the College's Annual Monitoring Report.

1.24 The Academic Office has a role in considering changes to programmes that arise from school board review, and there are University guidelines relating to major and minor modifications that allow the Academic Office to approve minor changes after confirmation by the University's Academic Development and Quality Enhancement Committee.

1.25 Given the responsibility that rests with the University as the validating agency, and in consideration of the length of the partnership and the material provided in support, the College's arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met. Programme records, including detailed specifications are effective, and the Academic Office and Registry hold appropriate responsibilities.

1.26 The review team scrutinised University regulations, the College Generic Handbook, data protection guidance, examples of programme specifications, and material relating to the recent full portfolio review. The team also met Academic Office and Registry staff responsible for creating and maintaining records and for version control, and with academic staff engaged in work on programme specifications.

1.27 The review team found that appropriate management and operational responsibilities are allocated to staff concerned with this work, effective records are maintained with appropriate regard to data security, and effective arrangements are in place for the management of modifications. The Academic Office and Registry staff, and academic staff engaged in work on programme specifications, confirmed their understanding of and adherence to the regulatory framework. The CEO of the College was, in a previous role, also the Data Protection Manager, and communicated a sense of personal understanding of, and commitment to, the management of data, and confirmed that data security was good. Other staff whom the team met confirmed their understanding of the responsibilities they held in the relationship with the University, of the processes for the management of student programme related information and data, and the role of the Programme Specification in recording programme information following programme validation activity. Support staff confirmed their responsibilities and actions in respect of the management of information about programme modifications. The team found that the College is maintaining effective definitive records of each programme and qualification, and of subsequent changes to it, and that these constitute reliable reference points for delivery and assessment, programme, monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

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

Findings

1.29 The College uses clear procedures for the design and approval of programmes through the partnership with the University. Modules are developed based on clear requirements linked to specific disciplines and based on staff and external adviser expertise. Programmes are validated through the University, using procedures for the approval of taught programmes. Course approval forms are submitted and considered by the University Portfolio Approval Committee. Programme content is informed by Subject Benchmark Statements, and assessment is mapped to intended learning outcomes in the validation documents.

1.30 Programme development and validation is informed by external consultation. Subject advice and input is obtained from programme advisers and professional bodies. Programme proposals are reviewed by a validation panel convened by the University, which includes an independent external assessor.

1.31 The use of the University validation procedure ensures that all programme documentation, including programme specifications, learning outcomes and assessment strategies, is aligned with Subject Benchmark Statements and to the FHEQ. External scrutiny and advice from professional advisers further assures this process, both in the development stage and the final programme approval process. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.32 The review team reviewed examples of course proposal and validation documents submitted to the Programme Approval Committee. Programme specifications and unit descriptors, along with assessment mapping evidence, were also scrutinised. The team met staff responsible for programme development and delivery, and a member of staff from the University, and were able to explore how professional practice informs programme content, learning outcomes and assessment to meet threshold academic standards.

1.33 The programme development and validation procedures work effectively through compliance with the arrangements put in place by the University. The scrutiny of the validation panel and external assessors ensures that learning outcomes and assessment meet threshold academic standards. Clear use of Subject Benchmark Statements supports the programme development and validation. Professional bodies also participate in and review course and unit developments, as well as learning outcomes and assessment strategies to ensure they meet sector practice requirements.

1.34 The review team considers the robust validation procedures at the College to effectively support the management of threshold 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 (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

1.35 The definitive programme documents include clear assessment criteria, which are subject to approval as part of the validation process set out by the University. Appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements and professional standards inform learning outcomes and assessment strategies, and are clearly linked to assessment criteria at module level. Theory and practical work is mapped to learning outcomes at the appropriate level and academic standards confirmed by external examiners.

1.36 The College operates a system of second marking of all assessed work to ensure the work is assessed fairly against the learning outcomes and the published grading criteria. The assessments are given weightings, which are set out in the unit descriptors. External examiners' comments confirm that the quality of assessment and assessed work meets the threshold academic standards for the awards. Outcomes of external reports are monitored by school boards, and cross-College oversight is maintained through the College's meeting structures framework, which includes the Academic Board and Academic Quality Committee.

1.37 The College completes an Annual Monitoring Report, which is submitted to the University in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement. The Annual Monitoring Report brings together key actions and good practices from Programme Monitoring Reports, including reflection on the outcomes of external examiner visits and student feedback. A College action plan is developed, and the implementation and monitoring of impact is undertaken through a number of committees, including school boards, the Teaching and Learning Forum, the Academic Quality Committee and the Academic Board.

1.38 The clear academic committee structure and terms of reference for individual groups provides clear evidence of a deliberative process for ensuring appropriate standards are maintained and reviewed. The monitoring of assessment outcomes by external examiners who attend assessment boards ensures the assessment is valid and set at the appropriate level. External examiners also review assessed work to ensure that grades awarded accurately reflect the work completed by individual students.

1.39 Assessment Committee minutes document the clear monitoring of assessment practice. The Annual Monitoring Report and the response to external examiner reports produced by the Director of Higher Education and submitted to the University also provides evidence of externality to support the management of academic standards. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.40 The review team reviewed examples of programme specifications and unit descriptors, along with assessment mapping. The programme monitoring Reports and Annual Monitoring Reports reviewed provide clear evidence of the effective management of academic standards. Minutes of Academic Board meetings and school boards also evidence

consideration of the management of academic standards and the identification of appropriate actions to further safeguard standards as appropriate. The team also met staff responsible for programme delivery and assessment, and were able to explore how the College manages the setting of assessment linked to professional body standards.

1.41 The process is clear and effective in monitoring academic standards at programme and College level. The effective use of external examiner reports ensures academic standards and fair assessment practices are maintained. The extensive network of professional body contacts further ensures that students are supported in developing the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to become sector practitioners.

1.42 The University monitors the quality of assessment and external examiner reports, along with College-devised action plans and Annual Monitoring Reports. The level of reporting and reflection ensures that the College develops and maintains effective assessment strategies at the required threshold levels. 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

1.43 College governance processes operate alongside the University framework of validation to ensure that UK threshold academic standards for validated provision are maintained. All programmes and modules devised by the College are approved and validated by the University and the management of assessment monitored. To support the monitoring and review of programmes the College produces Annual Monitoring Reports at a programme and institution level, which are subject to scrutiny by school boards, the Academic Quality Committee and the Academic Board. The review process monitors how academic threshold standards are monitored and takes account of comments made by external advisers and external examiners.

1.44 All partnership programmes are subject to periodic review and re-validation to ensure their currency and alignment with any revised Subject Benchmark Statements. The College produces a Reflective and Evaluative Review as part of the re-validation processes, which includes consideration of student achievement and progression and stakeholder feedback.

1.45 The programme and institution Annual Monitoring Reports provide a clear overview of management of assessment. The attendance of external examiners at assessment boards and their reports provide evidence that threshold academic standards are being met across all provision. The assessment boards and monitoring of reports by various committees form part of the College's quality cycle, which effectively tracks and monitors standards.

1.46 Institution recognition was undertaken by the University in 2012 as part of a five-year cycle, which includes detailed reviews of the College's mechanisms for assuring that academic standards are maintained. Following this review and additional scrutiny the College was awarded Full Partner status, clearly indicating confidence on the part of the awarding body that threshold academic standards are effectively managed. The evidence presented would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.47 The review team reviewed a range of evidence, including the University re-validation report, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports and College action plans. The College effectively scrutinises academic standards at programme level through Annual Monitoring Reports and the assessment board, attended by external examiners. Academic Quality Committee minutes provide clear evidence of the consistent review and management of academic standards in accordance with awarding body requirements.

1.48 The review team also met programme leaders, senior managers and representatives from the awarding body to gain additional insights into processes, requirements and procedures.

1.49 The College has a clear deliberative meetings structure, external reviews, mechanisms for the review of external examiner reports, and clear annual monitoring procedures. Together, these mechanisms provide evidence that the College effectively

ensures that programmes are reviewed and threshold academic standards are achieved in line with the awarding body requirements. Programme level review and reflection is discussed and actions reviewed at school boards through the Annual Monitoring Reports and action plans linked to external examiner reports. The Academic Quality Committee is responsible for oversight of annual monitoring at College level, and receives updates on action plans, alongside the College Annual Monitoring Report, to ensure threshold academic standards are met.

1.50 The internal quality assurance procedures, and review of reports by a range of College committees, ensures that the College has effective mechanisms for the management of programme review and academic standards. Annual Monitoring Reports are scrutinised by programme boards and the Academic Quality Committee; the College Annual Monitoring Report is received and evaluated by the awarding body. External examiner reports, and their attendance at assessment boards, ensure that matters relating to the management of assessment and academic standards are discussed and action plans put in place to address recommendations.

1.51 The quality cycle ensures that programme teams review their provision consistently, and external overview by the awarding body and external examiners ensures assessment and academic standards are reviewed and maintained. 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

1.52 The key policies and procedures that govern the management of academic standards and appropriate programme outcomes are produced by the University and aligned to the Quality Code. These include the requirements for programme design and approval, programme monitoring and review, and the use of external reports and scrutiny. The College complies with the requirements for programme monitoring and action planning, including those that take forward recommendations from external examiners, as set out in the Generic Document. Programme boards, Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board meetings, provide suitable forums for the review and monitoring actions linked to module assessment feedback from students and commentary set out in external reports.

1.53 External expertise informs the development of programme specifications and unit descriptors. As many of the programmes, including Conservation and Fine Arts, have strong practice-based elements, learning outcomes are aligned to professional sector expectations and practices as well as Subject Benchmark Statements. Programme advisers provide feedback on programme proposals and developments, as well as offering an external perspective on assessments and the quality of work. Programme validation processes ensure that academic standards are set at the appropriate level, and external examiner attendance at assessment boards and their written reports further assure that threshold standards are met.

1.54 The use of external examiners, programme advisers, and professional body and representative networks all ensure that programme content and assessment is appropriate. Programme validation and periodic review, along with the annual monitoring process, would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.55 The review team considered examples of programme specifications and unit descriptors, along with assessment mapping and Annual Monitoring Reports. The documents demonstrated compliance with awarding body requirements, and effective management of assessment and overall academic standards. The team also met senior managers and programme leaders to discuss how they make clear use of externality in the management of academic standards and compliance with awarding body requirements.

1.56 The process for designing programme content and assessment works effectively. Practical workshops facilitate students to develop skills linked to professional standards. Annual Monitoring Reports take account of external feedback and comments from professional advisers and document approaches to effective standards management.

1.57 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

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

1.59 All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated levels of risk are low. In all sections under academic standards the College is also required to adhere to the procedures of its awarding bodies and organisation. There are no recommendations, affirmations or features of good practice in this section.

1.60 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body 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 follows the University model for programme development and approval. New provision is aligned to the Quality Code, and the College works closely with the University and follows the validation process set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.

2.2 A business case for each new programme proposal is submitted to senior management for approval and to ensure it fits with the broader College development plans. External professional networks are consulted and the value of new provision to the profession explored. Once agreed, the development of the curriculum is informed by a range of external advisers and external bodies to ensure the academic provision is informed by sector skills and knowledge requirements and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Students are also consulted as part of new programme developments and offered a chance to comment through forums and tutors.

2.3 Initial proposals for new programmes are submitted to the University Portfolio Approval Committee for consideration before further development. Approved proposals are then developed by the College, informed by programme advisers, external professional networks, professional practices and Subject Benchmark Statements. Programme specifications and unit descriptors are developed, linked to learning outcomes along with appropriate assessment strategies. The programme document is submitted to the University's validation panel for approval as the second stage of programme development. The validation process requires the College to clearly demonstrate how threshold academic standards are met, along with the management of learning delivery and assessment.

2.4 The procedures used by the College are those of the awarding body and would allow the Expectation to be met. The oversight provided by the awarding body checks and assures that new programmes are developed and reviewed to meet the academic standards and learning opportunities delivery requirements. Programme specifications set out the learning outcomes and are mapped to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. This includes identification of resources needs and staffing as set out in the Partnership Handbook.

2.5 A range of minutes of meetings held both in the College and at the University were reviewed by the review team, along with examples of programme specifications and validation documents. The team also met senior managers and programme leaders to discuss the procedures for the development and approval of programmes. External examiner reports also provide clear independent opinion that programme documentation is clear and appropriate.

2.6 The procedures used by the College for the proposal and development of new programmes are clear. The College follows the process set out by the University in

producing programme approval documents for review by the University, and following approval develops definitive programme documentation.

2.7 The process of programme design is informed by the use of external specialists and professional practice knowledge and standards. The College academic committee structure ensures that the wider academic community is made aware of new developments and contributions to programme development can be made.

2.8 The delivery and effectiveness of programmes is reviewed by external examiners to support enhancement of provision and to ensure academic standards and quality of learning and assessment is kept under review. The Annual Monitoring Reports produced at programme and College level encourages evaluation of provision, including student and external examiner feedback, and the Annual Monitoring Report for the College is scrutinised by the University. The College portfolio of provision is also subject to review and re-validation by the awarding body to ensure programmes are fit for purpose. The College undertakes its own review and evaluation of its provision as part of the process, which informs areas for continuing development and enhancement.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.10 The College has developed recruitment, selection and admission policies appropriate to its mission, and recruits appropriately talented applicants. Admissions policies and procedures are designed to ensure fair admission and uphold the principles of equal opportunities. Progression data, the demographic profiles of entrants and their entry qualifications are scrutinised through monitoring to ensure that students are being effectively selected for their specific programmes of study. Admissions processes are also reviewed annually, with any changes being considered and approved by the Academic Quality Committee.

2.11 The College regards tutor reputation and networks highly in respect of recruitment, and their use results in students receiving a personalised experience and accurate information about programmes and the College's expectations. A public profile of staff and students provides a 'shop window' for student work, and the personal testimony of students is regarded as one of the most powerful ways of showing the College's educational mission, which supports recruitment. Tutors also visit 'feeder' Colleges.

2.12 All students who meet the minimum entry requirements are invited to interview and undergo a practical test or discuss a portfolio of their work. A minimum of two staff are present at interviews and provision may be made for interviews by online video conferencing and practical tests overseas. Provision is also made for students with disabilities or special needs, and students are able to indicate any specific needs on the application form so that they can be considered as part of the admissions process and discussed at interview.

2.13 In addition to prior educational attainment and qualifications, a candidate's relevant skills, and previous professional or creative experience and achievements, can be taken into consideration as demonstrated through the presentation of a portfolio of work or other evidence at interview. Students may be admitted on the basis of advanced standing (accreditation of prior experiential learning), in accordance with University policy.

2.14 Decisions are made on clearly stated criteria, which are applied fairly and consistently, and the programme information is periodically reviewed to ensure that it remains appropriate.

2.15 The College offers scholarships and bursaries, and students can receive assistance with course fees, for the cost of travel to work placements and to attend professional events. Potential students are advised on what might be available when attending interview and the award of bursaries is overseen by the Grants Committee. Awards are made on the basis of merit, academic potential and financial need, and an analysis of the award of recent bursaries has been made.

2.16 The College ensures that all applicants receive communications relating to decisions in a timely and professional manner. Students who are accepted receive an offer letter that states clearly how the place should be accepted, including required timescales for actions.

2.17 Unsuccessful applicants receive letters from the Admissions Officer explaining the decision and may request more detailed feedback from the programme tutor. They may also appeal to the Academic Registrar under the College's Student Complaints and Academic Appeals Policy. Students who wish to progress to a further programme at the College are required to make a formal application to do so.

2.18 The College is committed to supporting the transition from applicant to student, and future students are invited to end-of-year exhibitions and 'open house' events that allow them to view current work, meet with students and speak with tutors. Students also receive a welcome letter and welcome packs containing useful practical information.

2.19 Training is provided to all who have responsibility for the recruitment and selection of students, and the Admissions Policy is reviewed annually. The College belongs to the UK Council for International Student Affairs and benefits from the provision of training to ensure that staff with responsibility for supporting students from overseas are well briefed on legislation relating to visas.

2.20 Patterns of recruitment, progression and completion are reviewed through the annual monitoring process. Outcomes are discussed by school boards and the Academic Board prior to submission to the University. Any issues identified are addressed in school action plans, which form part of the consolidated Institutional Action Plan. As part of regular updates on College matters, the Board of Trustees also receive a regular report on recruitment.

2.21 The College's data protection guidance clearly states how personal data is managed and how it may be passed on to legitimate third parties within the terms of the *Data Protection Act*. Any student has the right to request to see records that the College holds about them. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.22 The review team scrutinised a range of College documentation that supports recruitment and admissions, from the top level mission statement that guides the College approach, through policies and procedures, information on the approach to staff training, material related to information for applicants, material relating to review and monitoring, and examples of communication with applicants. The team also met students, and management, academic and support staff, to test their understanding of the operational management of the policies, processes and procedures.

2.23 The College operates a very effective and personalised approach to the application and recruitment process. The review team noted the carefully thought out and effectively managed recruitment and admissions process that brings applicants into direct contact not only with the College, its staff, students and environment, but also with the professional outcomes of their discipline practice. The levels of retention achieved and the levels of satisfaction demonstrated from student questionnaires indicate that the consideration and care with which the Collage has designed, and is operating, admissions procedures is bringing real benefit to applicants and the institution. The links between the use in recruitment of teaching staff who are conservation and creative professionals, and their networks, and the work with current students support the College's engagement with the Student Employability theme.

2.24 In recent student questionnaires (2014 and 2015) questions relating to the admissions process received positive responses from students, with approval ratings scoring over 80 per cent. Students the review team met confirmed that the College's approach led to an admissions process that was clear and transparent, and spoke positively of their experience of the portfolio review process and induction.

2.25 Staff whom the review team met confirmed the College's position on recruitment and admissions, and spoke of a formalised process of admission supported by the Admissions Policy, standardised documents and the sharing of good practice. They also confirmed the information presented in the self-evaluation document about portfolio review, practical tests, open day attendance and communication with applicants.

2.26 The review team found that the bespoke and effective College recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures: adhere to the principles of fair admission; are transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive; and are supported by appropriate organisational structures and processes. The approach taken support the College in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme, and also provides effective feedback to those who are not successful.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.28 The Teaching and Learning Strategy formally commits to the enhancement of teaching quality through staff development. The College recognises that its highly specialised teaching staff are a vital aspect of the educational provision, and opportunities for staff development and training are set out in the Employee Learning and Development Strategy. The College has introduced an enhanced appraisal procedure; the Peer Observation Policy informs the formal appraisal process and is monitored by the Teaching and Learning Forum, which receives an annual report and discusses its effectiveness.

2.29 Teaching staff have been supported to achieve Higher Education Academy accreditation. Staff have also had access to workshops on effective assessment and feedback, technology in teaching, learning and assessment, and approaches to teaching large and small groups. In addition, they have attended the Teaching and Learning Conference at the University, and Internal Tutor Seminar days.

2.30 The College recruits staff who are fully qualified through teaching experience and academic background. The Employee Learning and Development Strategy sets out the responsibility for staff to ensure their ongoing personal and professional development and defines the role of the human resources department in delivering effective training. New teaching staff are expected to apply for Higher Education Academy fellowship within two years of their appointment, and may enrol on the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education that will prepare them to develop a suitable portfolio. Staff can have 50 per cent of postgraduate course fees paid by the College.

2.31 The Research Strategy and action plan articulates the importance of the link between research and pedagogy; staff engagement in research activity is supported by three research groups. Research is seen as an important dimension of College work and the College undertakes annual surveys of staff research activity as a means of recording and monitoring the reach of the work undertaken, and understanding how best it can be supported in the future.

2.32 The College supports and encourages staff to take up external roles to support understanding of good practice across higher education and cites examples of engagement with organisations, including QAA, as external examiners and as professional advisers.

2.33 As a support for learning the College has an artist in residence scheme that brings talented artists to develop their work, and a programme of over 60 UK and overseas visiting lecturers who present specialist skills.

2.34 The Teaching and Learning Strategy is regularly monitored by the Academic Board and the Learning and Teaching Forum. Opportunities for enhancements in the College's provision of learning and teaching are systematically reviewed through annual monitoring, school boards, annual student questionnaire and external examiner reports.

2.35 Annual monitoring considers the process of learning and teaching through the analysis of data and statistics, and through student questionnaires, external examiner comments, and the consideration of course-level annual monitoring views on resources. External examiner reports and the outcomes of student questionnaires are evaluated with a view to programme enhancement. The annual student questionnaire seeks reflection on experience and some questions refer specifically to learning and teaching.

2.36 Teaching and learning gained strong approval ratings in recent student questionnaire. Areas of limited approval can lead to the identification of an action for the forthcoming year. External examiners are required to reflect on the quality of learning and teaching; points raised by external examiners are given close consideration through annual monitoring and are addressed through the relevant action plan.

2.37 The College is committed to providing appropriate information technology and provides access to personal IT facilities and services, and to specialist applications. A mixed picture of satisfaction emerges from the most recent student questionnaire in relation to the student intranet, and the College has undertaken extensive development for the current academic year, which has involved introducing minimum content requirements, improved structure and providing support for tutors in publishing course documents. A focus group seeks feedback from students on the effectiveness of the intranet and opportunities for improvement. The Information Systems Steering Group allows staff and students to discuss IT matters.

2.38 The College provides information about learning opportunities and support through the course handbook, the Generic Document and through the website. Student responsibilities are set out in the Student Code of Conduct, the Generic Document and the Student Attendance Policy. These are available both on the main website and through the student intranet, and set out the College's overall expectations for student behaviour and their engagement in learning. Tutors promote an ethos that combines high levels of personal support with the principle that students should be self-reflective and autonomous.

2.39 The College places a strong emphasis on acquiring strong practical skills through investment of time, and students are informed that committed attendance in classes, seminars, lectures, tutorials and all other core learning activities is vital to progress. The emphasis on attendance on site, coupled with small cohort sizes and dedicated teaching spaces, has enabled staff to be responsive and flexible in their teaching practice, and supports high levels of achievement as well as opportunities for extracurricular activities.

2.40 The College has recognised the need for work on forward planning and the timetable to address recent student feedback on the quality of course organisation and management. Extensive work has been undertaken in these areas and student feedback confirms the positive impact this work has had.

2.41 The Generic Document also sets out the nature and general principles of formal assessment and the manner in which it relates to informal feedback provided throughout the academic year by tutors. In between formal assessment points, tutorials reviews and critiques are employed by the teaching staff to give guidance on levels of performance and steps needed for progress. The small group nature of teaching means that this level of interaction informs both practical and the more academic aspects of student work. Formative written feedback is also given during units and a standardised form has been introduced to ensure consistency of practice. In the 2015 student questionnaire, the quality and usefulness of feedback was clearly identified as an area for improvement. The College takes the question of high quality and informative feedback to students seriously and has taken action to address this issue, including a review of induction and the implementation of staff development and training.

2.42 The information provided testifies to an effective, specialised learning environment, and a range of support services and activities, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.43 The review team scrutinised a range of College documentation related to learning and teaching approaches; opportunities and practices from mission and strategic level material through to operational policies and procedures; information on the approach to staff development; material related to resource information; and material relating to review and monitoring. The team also saw evidence of student feedback on resources and evidence of institutional response. In addition, the team met students, and management, academic and support staff, to test their understandings of the operation of the learning and teaching environment, its management, and the policies, processes and procedures that support it.

2.44 The College provides an effective and specialised learning and teaching environment, and a bespoke range of support services and activities well supported by the activity of the Foundation, and by planning and management processes.

2.45 The College has a commitment to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, and aims for each individual student to develop a deep engagement with the practice of their discipline and a strong awareness of how it relates to historical, theoretical, cultural and contextual frameworks. The College also seeks to ensure that every student has equal and effective opportunities to achieve intended learning outcomes. On completion of programmes of study students should have become 'practically accomplished, theoretically aware and professionally autonomous practitioners in their disciplines'. The College believes that its small size, and its structure, which is supported by committees at which there is strong student representation, allows good practice to be easily and efficiently shared, and ensures that enhancement occurs in a timely and effective manner. In support of enhancement, the Teaching and Learning Strategy 2012-17 states clear strategic priorities in relation to practice-led study; the integration of theory and practice; engagement in professional practice; enhancement of learning resources and staff development; and claims that these strategic priorities have led to recent specific actions and initiatives.

2.46 There is clear evidence that students feel well supported. Student questionnaires indicate a high level of satisfaction with visiting lecturers, with over 92 per cent of students providing a positive response in one example. Teaching and learning also gains strong approval ratings: in recent feedback there were strong approval ratings for the academic provision at the College.

2.47 Satisfaction with the College's IT provision is high. In 2014, 83 per cent of respondents supported the statement that 'The provision of IT facilities within the College was useful to my studies'; in 2015 the figure was 76 per cent.

2.48 The quality of the workshops and the studios is recognised by the College's students. In 2015, 75 per cent of students who completed the student questionnaire considered that 'The workshop and studio facilities are of a high standard' and 87.5 per cent felt that 'The equipment and tools in the workshop are effective and useful'. In the course of submitting reports, external examiners regularly comment on the high quality of the workshops and studios in which students learn and develop their skills. In the same questionnaire, the quality and usefulness of feedback was clearly identified as an area for improvement. The College takes the question of high quality and informative feedback to students seriously and has taken action to address this issue, including a review of induction and the implementation of staff development and training.

2.49 Students the review team met spoke positively about all aspects of the learning and teaching experience: induction, policy approaches, their potential to be involved, handbooks and information, and the practical resources and information about them. There were positive responses on IT and library resources and on tutorials and feedback, however,

some students noted that feedback deadlines were not always met, although the situation was improving.

2.50 Staff confirmed an effective planning approach to the learning environment involving a recent independent review, a current 10-year planning project and specific recent action on the virtual learning environment and study support. Senior staff confirmed an effective approach to the capital strategy and planning, with an annual process of budget setting involving department heads and a College strategic development plan involving a two-track approach.

2.51 Academic staff confirmed their effective involvement in the management of teaching and learning resources and spoke of support for their own staff development through appraisal, peer review and subsequent development opportunities. They confirmed the effective use of visiting lecturers and external specialists, recent development work on assessment feedback and the use of standardised forms. Staff were also able to speak with confidence about resource planning, and confirmed an effective low-level operation with a student-led approach to the renewal of consumables and a bidding system that works well. The availability of funding for specialised equipment was confirmed and the example of the new analytical lab was given. Academic staff also confirmed recent developments in the IT environment, including uploading notes, presentations, reading lists and other information to the intranet, and their engagement in institutional debate on the future use of digital resources.

2.52 The approach to the provision of the learning and teaching environment clearly follows from the College strategic vision and ethos. The strategic, professional and practice-led approach to teaching, which is effectively supported by ongoing research and development, is **good practice**. There is much emphasis on the small group nature, the workshop base and the specialist expertise of the staff, and the team confirmed the effectiveness and impact of the approach. The quality and impact of the learning environment is high; support to students is comprehensive across practical, theoretical and contextual elements, and effective learning is being delivered in this environment.

2.53 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

2.54 The College has established mature, well monitored and effective arrangements to oversee and evaluate its higher education provision of teaching and support for learning, and for its support and guidance of students in their opportunities to develop academic, personal and professional potential.

2.55 The Teaching and Learning Strategy states the aim that 'students become practically accomplished, theoretically aware and professionally autonomous practitioners' and the Strategy sets out priorities to support students developing their potential. Behind these priorities, the College seeks to make the most of specific West Dean characteristics that result from the teaching traditions of the College and its unique setting. The progress of actions relating to the Teaching and Learning Strategy is monitored through the Learning and Teaching Forum and through the College committee structure.

2.56 The mandatory and comprehensive induction process ensures awareness of the College's expectations and overall ethos. The programme contextualises the College's approaches to learning and teaching, shows how theoretical and practical aspects of programmes interrelate, and ensures that students are fully appraised of the wide-ranging learning opportunities within and outside their programmes.

2.57 The College regards the tutorial system as a significant element of provision, and is committed to maintaining an average student to staff ratio of 8:1 for workshop and studio teaching. Formal one-to-one tutorials take place a minimum of three times a term, and on some programmes weekly, so that students are given regular feedback on their work outside of formal assessment points.

2.58 The College provides study skill support for dyslexia, English language and general study skills, and a Study Skills Adviser post was created in 2014-15, replacing previous external provision. Study skills support is made available through practical workshops and lectures to support research skills. Advice on the use of online databases and matters relating to preparing essays, and referencing and support, is provided as part of specific units of study, and students can access one-to-one sessions with the Study Skills Adviser to help with specific challenges or to access general advice. The Study Skills Adviser has also prepared guides and advice that can be accessed through the student intranet. The Study Skills Adviser is trained to support students with learning difficulties, and students can be referred to an external specialist adviser for assessment and advice. Students can also access a professional counselling service and other specialist support by appointment.

2.59 The College is committed to the maintenance and enhancement of its range of learning resources, including the library and Edward James Cultural Archive. The library offers access to over 80 specialist journals and publications, and students can access inter-library loan services, electronic journals and specialist databases. Students on the Visual Arts programmes make use of the library, borrowing facilities of the University of Chichester through a reciprocal agreement. Increased access to the Edward James Cultural Archive has supported better integration of this unique teaching and learning environment with programmes and individual research projects. Students and staff make effective use of these documents and resources.

2.60 Workshops, studios and technicians are core to the College's provision. Well-equipped and supported specialist facilities are open on campus from 7am to 10pm daily during term time. Tutors, associate tutors and a team of workshop technicians provide support for students in specific processes seven days a week.

2.61 The College has committed to a review of learning and teaching spaces for all programmes, and work is being done on an initial space masterplan as part of the Vision 2025 initiative. To maintain current high standards of studio and workshop equipment there is a process of annual budget setting as part of the planning process, which includes capital investment; the fundraising team is developing a longer-term strategy to seek external funding for major capital projects.

2.62 The College has an artist in residence scheme for accomplished artists, makers and conservators who have a connection with a College specialism or have expertise in interdisciplinary practice that will enrich the College's cultural life. Artists are provided with workshop space and accommodation, and spend time with students and staff.

2.63 Short course access is available to full-time students, who are strongly encouraged to attend courses that complement their discipline. Programme tutors advise students on how best to incorporate these opportunities into their study programmes.

2.64 The Teaching and Learning Strategy intends that students are able to translate their abilities into a successful professional career, and the College is committed to ensuring that teaching and learning practices are subject or discipline specific. The inherently vocational nature of most of the programmes and the small scale of the provision allows careers advice to be focused at programme level. Small group tuition allows students to access informal careers support and advice from tutors, who are supported by significant professional networks, and the College claims a range of valuable relationships in this area.

2.65 The College supports students to engage in work placements, principally in the conservation subjects, and claims to be actively pursuing means to expand this activity to other areas or through alternative activities. Students are supported in taking up opportunities for work placements within public and private organisations as a means to develop their experience as practitioners in their discipline of choice; there is a Work Placement Policy that sets out the expectations and responsibilities for students, placement providers, programme tutors and the Academic Registrar. Programmes include taught sessions that develop generic skills to help students in gaining employment, and examples are provided.

2.66 The School of Creative Arts offers professional practice study units that cover a range of themes related to making a living as a practicing artist. Visual Arts students are allocated a professional development budget, which can be used to attend practice-related exhibitions, conferences or symposia. Recent student questionnaires indicate that students feel they are being provided with skills that support future employment, and the College evaluates the strength of the support provided for students in the context of high retention rates and the strong employability trends.

2.67 Within its highly specialised context the College provides well designed services to support student development and achievement, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.68 The review team scrutinised a range of College documentation related to learning and teaching arrangements, and resources from strategic commitments to programme level material, operational policies and procedures, and examples of support. The team also saw evidence of student feedback and evidence of institutional response. In addition, the team met students, and management, academic and support staff, to test their understandings of

the operation of the learning and teaching arrangements and resources, their management, and the policies, processes and procedures that support them.

2.69 The College provides excellent learning resources both in formal spaces and in the wider institutional environment. Staff make effective professional use of these and the additional learning environments and resources provided internally, and staff have professional access to first class external environments, for example in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

2.70 Recent student evaluation of induction demonstrated that 82.5 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that 'The one-week induction period was well-organised and clear', and the recent student questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with library services. Questionnaires also indicate satisfaction with College library services - when asked whether they felt that 'The provision of books is of a high standard', 95 per cent of respondents in 2014, and 92 per cent in 2015, approved. When asked about the efficiency of help with enquiries, 87 per cent of respondents in 2014, and 94 per cent in 2015, showed satisfaction with the support that they had received.

2.71 Students whom the review team met were positive about the range of environments provided to them and indicated that they received good IT support. They confirmed that students are given support with learning difficulties/needs and that the tutorial system was widely used but varies according to the programmes. During induction week students meet IT and library staff, and receive a practice-led tour of workshops and an introduction to equipment. Students confirmed the importance attached to health and safety, and confirmed that some equipment could not be used until they have been signed off with the Health and Safety Passport. Access to workshops from 7am to 10pm every day was confirmed and students indicated also that creative writing students were encouraged to use the workshops and make use of objects in a practical way.

2.72 Students also spoke positively about access to additional learning resources, including visits to museums, retailers and other professionals, and the use of visiting lecturers and speakers.

2.73 The review team heard from senior staff about the strategic planning of resources and how this followed from the College's mission; academic and support staff confirmed this approach. Academic and support staff confirmed their involvement in the planning and management of specialised, discipline-specific learning resources, and spoke positively of College responsiveness, citing examples, indicating their ability to have building work done; to apply for funding for specialised equipment, some of which could be supported by external resources; and to acquire specialist resources and equipment such as the analytical laboratory. The excellent, discipline-specific and professionally informed use of resources in both formal learning spaces and the wider institution to promote high quality education is **good practice**.

2.74 The provision of learning and teaching resources follows from the College strategic vision and ethos, and there is emphasis on the small group nature, the workshop base and the specialist expertise of the staff. The review team confirmed the effectiveness and the impact of the planning and operation of the approach. Students confirm that the quality and impact of learning resources is high and provides support to students for effective learning.

2.75 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of the 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

2.76 A Student Forum has been established by the College since 2014 and is made up of elected student representatives. Students are made aware of the role of student representatives as part of induction, and provided with a Student Association Guide, which sets out the student representative role. The Student Forum is chaired by the Student President, who is elected by the student body, and made up of student representatives from each of the subject areas, as well as number of additional representatives who also engage with social and pastoral matters. The Student Forum meets termly and is open to all students. Minutes of meetings are taken and shared with the Director of Education, who raises relevant matters at the Academic Quality Committee or Academic Board, as appropriate. Student representatives are provided with a training workshop and encouraged to attend events linked to enhancement initiatives. A section of the intranet is available to the Student Forum to publicise events and to disseminate information.

2.77 Student representatives are provided with information about the opportunities for engagement with the College's quality assurance procedures, including attendance at school boards and other meetings. The Student President is also a member of the Academic Board and reports formally on student matters. Student representatives are also encouraged to attend a range of College meetings, and representatives are nominated to look after areas of finance and fundraising, entertainment, marketing, IT and international student matters. Students are also represented on the Teaching and Learning Forum, and use the opportunity to feedback on the quality of information and guidance received through handbooks.

2.78 The College collects student views and feedback through a range of methods, including student focus groups and student surveys. Students have been engaged with the development of the College intranet, and the intranet focus group provides feedback as part of the ongoing development of online services. Surveys are also conducted annually to monitor and review the quality of the student learning experience, although the small size of the College means that informal feedback also informs developments. Recently, weekly student-tutor meetings have been introduced for individual subject areas to provide updates on College developments, as well as affording students the opportunity to raise matters of concern or to seek clarification on programme related issues.

2.79 The review team reviewed minutes of meetings, student survey feedback and the Student Association Guide, and the terms of reference of the Student Forum and Academic Board. The team also met staff and students to review the quality of student engagement. Students indicated that they feel that they are able to raise any points both formally and informally with staff, and that the College is responsive to issues raised.

2.80 The ongoing contact with students as demonstrated in minutes of meetings demonstrates that the College has a clear strategy for engaging with the student body. The College provides a number of opportunities for students to engage in the quality assurance and enhancement of learning opportunities, including through the Student Forum, student focus groups and student feedback surveys. The additional weekly student-tutor forums provide additional opportunities for students to raise and discuss programme issues with academic staff.

2.81 The mechanisms for student engagement are clearly set out to students through induction, the Student Association Guide and training events. Weekly student-tutor meetings are scheduled in subject areas, and students are encouraged to attend a range of meetings to provide a student perspective on the management and development of provision, including school boards, the Academic Board and the Teaching and Learning Forum.

2.82 There is clear evidence of student engagement via staff-student meetings, tutorials, representation at programme school board meetings and through student surveys, which demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with College engagement and responsiveness to student feedback. The small size of the College facilitates formal and informal student engagement, as students tend to be well known by teaching and support staff. There are clear mechanisms for communicating with students through Student Forum meetings, tutorials, and advice and guidance through the Academic Registrar's team.

2.83 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

2.84 Assessment is effectively managed by the College through the use of programme specifications, which set out learning outcomes that are approved as part of the programme validation process. Each specification includes assessment strategies that support the articulation of learning outcomes with programme aims and assessment criteria. The requirements for the provision of feedback on practical and written assessments is set out in the College Generic Document, although not all assessment is returned within the two-week turnaround period.

2.85 Summative assessment takes place at the end of each semester for full-time programmes, and at the end of the year for part-time provision. The assessment strategy reflects the practice-based content of the provision, and students are required to submit portfolios of their work along with written reflective commentary. Programme delivery strategies include practical, theoretical and professional elements, which in most cases are taught in semester blocks. The College employs programme advisers, who provide independent commentary of learning and assessment, although they are not involved in the assessment process. Students receive formative feedback on their work, which supports them to reflect on their progress and is captured in workshop feedback. All work is double marked to support the rigour of assessment; cross-school moderation of work has recently been introduced. Unit tutors also provide students with ongoing formative feedback on their work through tutorials and workshops.

2.86 Marking schemes and guidance is provided to students, and, following student feedback, has been revised to provide greater clarity. Student feedback from induction surveys indicates improved satisfaction with the understanding of grading. The College is working to improve assessment feedback practices through staff development and consideration of feedback received from students and external examiners. Students with learning disabilities and difficulties are provided with reasonable adjustments, such as additional time. Any alternatives to the set assessment are managed in accordance with University regulations.

2.87 Procedures for the management of academic malpractice are set out in the College Student Assessment and Academic Misconduct Policies, which reflect the procedures of the University. The Student Assessment and Academic Misconduct Policies, and the principles of undertaking work with honesty and integrity, are highlighted in the Student Code of Conduct. Students indicated that they receive clear guidance on how to avoid plagiarism.

2.88 The College uses University regulations covering the recognition of prior learning, which allows for a maximum of 40 credits to be recognised subject to confirmation that the unit learning outcomes align with the previous work undertaken prior to a student being admitted to a programme.

2.89 The College has clear procedures governing the assessment of student work, which includes formative and summative feedback and the double marking of work, as well as moderation of assessment. Assessment criteria and learning outcomes are approved as

part of programme validation, and staff use the College policy, aligned to that of the University, to manage academic misconduct. Tutors provide students with ongoing formative assessment on practical work, and students are supported to reflect on their performance and to become self-evaluative. Exam boards held at the College but chaired and observed by the University, along with external examiner reports, ensure and confirm that the management of assessment is robust.

2.90 The review team **affirms** the work being undertaken by the College to improve the timing and quality of summative feedback.

2.91 The regulations governing non-standard assessment are based on those of the awarding body and alternative forms of assessment are managed in accordance with University regulations. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.92 A range of regulatory documents governing assessment, academic malpractice and the Student Code of Conduct were reviewed by the review team, along with the College Generic Document covering the management of assessment and feedback. External examiner reports, Annual Monitoring Reports and associated action plans confirm that the College complies with University guidance and expectations. Course and assessment board minutes confirm that assessment is effective and at the correct level.

2.93 The review team also met staff and students to gain clarity on the timescales for assessment feedback and the management of plagiarism. Student feedback and student surveys further confirmed the clarity of the support available for assessment, which is reviewed as part of annual monitoring to support improvements.

2.94 The assessment of student work is effectively managed using assessment procedures set out in the College Generic Document. Practical work is supported by ongoing formative assessment, and students have access to tutors for additional support and explanation. Due to the small numbers of students and the practical nature of assessment, blind marking is not possible, but two assessors mark work independently. External examiners attend assessment panels and ensure that assessment grading is appropriate and that standards are maintained. Results are then reviewed and approved by the External Exam Board.

2.95 The quality of written feedback is an area for development for the College, and staff development is taking place to support improvements in the quality of written feedback. Students indicate satisfaction with the assessment process.

2.96 The attendance of external examiners at assessment boards provides external scrutiny of assessments and outcomes. The use of clear academic misconduct policies supports the effective management of assessment grading, and students are supported in understanding the requirements for honesty and integrity through the Student Code of Conduct. Regulations for the recognition of prior learning are those of the University, and require the clear mapping of learning outcomes, which are monitored by the University.

2.97 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

2.98 External examiners are nominated by the College, and approved and appointed by the University. They undertake their duties in line with guidance provided in the University's handbook for external examiners. External examiner reports are submitted to the University, which reviews them, before passing them to the Director of Education at the College, who disseminates reports to programme leaders.

2.99 Newly appointed external examiners are provided with an induction to the College and supplied with the definitive course documents and assessment and grading schemes. External examiners meet with students as part of their visits to the College, and also attend programme assessment boards and review samples of student work in accordance with University guidance. External examiners comment on the management of standards, marking criteria, and the rigour and appropriateness of the assessment process, and reports are forwarded to the University prior to being passed to the College. A formal response to external examiner reports is produced by the Director of Education and submitted to the University.

2.100 The Director of Education maintains oversight of external feedback through receipt of external examiner reports. Key recommendations and action plans developed by programme teams are discussed at programme team meetings and reviewed by the Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board. External examiner feedback informs programme monitoring and the setting of priorities in the Annual Monitoring Report. The College ensures that action plans are produced in response to points raised by external examiners, which are internally approved, with points added to the overall College action plan, which is submitted to the Academic Board. Students are provided with access to external examiner reports and these are also discussed at school meetings, where students are represented.

2.101 The clear procedures at programme team and school level involved in the production of action plans in response to external examiner recommendations ensures all recommendations are considered and improvements implemented. Action plans and progress are monitored at school board meetings, and by the Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board, and outcomes reported to the University through Annual Monitoring Reports. The minutes of meetings and subsequent external examiner reports demonstrate that the College makes clear and scrupulous use of external examiner feedback. The processes in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.102 The review team reviewed external examiner reports, Annual Monitoring Reports and Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board minutes. The use of external examiner reports and associated action plans were discussed at meeting with staff and students, and students were able to comment confidently on improvements linked to recommendations.

2.103 The College has in place robust mechanisms for the effective management of external examiner reports. External examiners attend assessment boards and feedback to staff on the quality of assessment strategies, marking and feedback. External examiners are also able to comment on the assessment of practice-based work through review of portfolios and meetings with students.

2.104 Programme leaders submit responses to the head of school linked to external examiner reports and draft action plans, which form part of the annual monitoring process. These are considered by school boards, and the Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board, and formally monitored by the Director of Education, who provides formal responses to external examiners. Action points form part of the College Annual Monitoring Report, which is submitted to the University and progress monitored on an ongoing basis.

2.105 The Annual Monitoring Reports and action plans produced in response to external examiner reports are considered at programme, school and College level, and outcomes minuted at school boards, and the Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board. The implementation of recommendations is further supported through oversight by the University through meetings with the link tutor and consideration of Annual Monitoring Reports.

2.106 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

2.107 The College operates a formal process of annual monitoring at programme and institution level, which meets the requirements of the University. Each individual programme is required to develop an Annual Monitoring Report, which includes consideration of student feedback, external examiner reports and consideration of data on student progression and achievement. Programme leaders comment on actions taken and enhancements developed to further assure the assessment of students and the quality of the learning experience. A College-level report is compiled by the Director of Education and includes sections outlining responses to external examiner reports and actions taken in response to student feedback, which is discussed at the Academic Board and forwarded to the University, which reviews the report at its Collaborative Provision Committee. The action plan sets out and provides a basis for monitoring of areas for improvement at a programme and institution level, along with any associated staff development needs. The annual monitoring process also offers an opportunity for the College to identify and share good practice that can inform improvement to teaching and learning.

2.108 Annual Monitoring Reports and action plans are reviewed and monitored by school boards, the Academic Quality Committee and the Academic Board, which students also attend. Students are able to comment on suggested actions and priorities for improvement.

2.109 The College is also subject to periodic review by the University as part of its validation, approval and monitoring process. Each validated programme is required to submit documentation along with a reflective evaluation. The College Generic Document sets out the procedures for managing the quality of provision and assessment and the contextualisation of overarching academic framework provided by the University. The College portfolio was successfully revalidated in 2014.

2.110 The University re-validation recommended that the College consider some additional areas, which has resulted in the course documentation being revised to improve articulation of learning outcomes. A common format for programme specifications and unit descriptors has been introduced across all provision.

2.111 The clearly defined annual monitoring system for the generation of reports based on stakeholder feedback, and the associated action plans, would allow the Expectation to be met. The monitoring of the College Annual Monitoring Report by the University further supports the review and development of student learning and assessment.

2.112 The review team reviewed Annual Monitoring Reports for the last two years, and minutes of Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board meetings, and met staff and students to explore how priorities are established and progress monitored. The team found clear evidence of programme monitoring and review at programme, school and College level, along with external scrutiny and approval by the University.

2.113 The Annual Monitoring Reports provide clear evidence of effective and ongoing programme review and evaluation at course, school and College level. Reports reflect on external examiner and student feedback, and action plans identify key areas for development. These are reviewed and monitored by school boards, the Academic

Management Committee and the Academic Board to ensure appropriate actions are taken and the impact of actions on the quality of learning and teaching evaluated.

2.114 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

2.115 The College has developed a clear Student Complaints and Academic Appeals Policy, which includes the right of appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The document is available to students through the student intranet and the College website. Students are also made aware of the policy through the College Generic Document and through their course handbook.

2.116 The first point of contact for any student wishing to raise a complaint or appeal is the Academic Office. The Academic Registrar is responsible for receiving appeals and complaints, and will seek to provide a response to the student within seven working days. The Academic Registrar will explore ways of resolving appeals and complaints informally in the first instance, through involving tutors or other members of staff or student representatives to find a local solution. Where a student raises a complaint about the behaviour of another student, the College will manage the matter with reference to the Student Code of Conduct.

2.117 Where complaints or appeals cannot be resolved informally to the student's satisfaction, the matter is referred to the Director of Education to undertake a formal investigation. The Director of Education will contact the appropriate manager and ask them to try and resolve the matter. Should this not be possible the Director of Education may choose to try and resolve the complaint or appeal, dismiss the matter if evidence is not clear, or refer the matter to a complaints panel. Should a student not be satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaints process, a formal appeal may be made to the CEO. Should the student continue to be dissatisfied with the outcome, they are able to take the matter to the OIA.

2.118 Where an academic appeal or complaint cannot be resolved by the College, the student has the right to go the University, raise the matter using the University's policy and procedures. The matter will then be managed by the University and outcomes notified to the College.

2.119 The review team reviewed the College's policy and guidance in the Generic Document and the course handbook. In addition, the team met students to gain their feedback on whether the process is clear and accessible. The team also met staff to explore how complaints and appeals are handled formally and informally, and confirmed that students were familiar with how a complaint or appeal could be made.

2.120 The complaints and appeals process is clearly set out in College documentation. Students are made aware of the complaints and appeals procedures as part of their induction. The policy and sources of guidance through the Academic Office is also signposted in the course handbook and in the College Generic Document. Documents are accessible through the intranet and the College website.

2.121 The policy and procedures for complaints and appeals are clear and accessible, and have been updated to include reference to the OIA. There is a clear distinction between complaints and academic appeals, and the Generic Document as well as the policy make clear the steps in the process and the timelines. Students are also made aware of their right

to appeal to the University and to the OIA during induction and through the website and intranet.

2.122 The College policy is clear and supported by that of the University. Students are made aware of their right to raise a complaint or academic appeal as part of their induction programme as well as through their course handbook and the Generic Document. Students are able to gain advice on the process through the Academic Office.

2.123 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

2.124 The College takes a strategic approach to building networks and partnerships to support placement and work-related activity. Students on the FdA Historic Craft Practices and School of Conservation Postgraduate Diploma programmes are strongly encouraged to take up opportunities for work placements.

2.125 The principles governing work placements are set out in unit descriptors and in the Work Placement Policy, which supports the implementation and management of these arrangements. Further supporting information is given in the College course handbook and the Generic Document.

2.126 The Work Placement Policy requires that placements have clearly defined learning outcomes aligned to both a specific unit and the overall programme of study. This supports students to achieve learning outcomes demonstrated through assessment, and ensures that work placement learning outcomes are clear. Students are made aware of the consequences of failure to complete the work placement or to realise the learning outcomes. The College believes that the management of work placements is more effective when all parties are made clearly aware of their responsibilities and the importance of ensuring that the desired outcomes of placements are met.

2.127 Student responsibilities are explained at an early stage so that expectations can be fully managed, and it is expected that they are responsible for proposing, negotiating and securing their work placement. In addition to the duty to carry out the work activities that are expected in a professional manner, the student is expected to inform both the programme tutor and the work placement provider of any health and safety concerns, incidents in which they are involved, and personal factors that may have a consequence on the successful outcome of the placement.

2.128 The programme leader/tutor has responsibility for briefing the work placement provider about intended learning outcomes and setting out the expectations and responsibilities of the College, the student and the provider, and will ensure that the provider is aware of their administrative responsibilities in the placement, including registration and the completion of a feedback form at the end of the placement. The tutor contacts the student within the first two days of the placement and establishes a pattern of regular contact for the placement. The tutor has a responsibility for assessment and feedback, and students are informed of arrangements for this before starting the placement.

2.129 The work placement provider is made clear about the responsibilities they need to fulfil as a committed partner in the placement arrangement. A supervisor supports the student in understanding procedures, ensuring that appropriate skills development occurs, and by providing feedback to the student and to the College. No formal assessment is devolved to the work placement provider. Students are required to prepare a presentation on their placement or submit a reflective e-journal that discusses the learning processes and challenges.

2.130 Early in the first teaching term students undertaking work placements receive a briefing that sets expectations around the responsibilities of all parties and stresses the need for an early discussion of the expected learning outcomes of the placement with the provider and the tutor.

2.131 The College ensures that all work placements are fully supported from an administrative and monitoring point of view, much of which falls to the Academic Registrar. The College monitors the effectiveness of its work placements through a number of means, in addition to the ongoing individual monitoring that tutors undertake during the placement, and then immediately on the student's return. The head of school and programme tutors consider feedback on placements at school board meetings, and students can voice their comments on the placement experience and suggest improvements. The relevant school board oversees annual monitoring, and the outcomes of student questionnaires, external examiner reports and programme adviser reports, which may feature points in relation to work placements, are discussed and can result in action planning.

2.132 The Teaching and Learning Forum receives an annual work placement report that summarises generic feedback from tutors, students and work placement providers; and provides a reflection on changes to work placement management and possible suggestions for improvements. This also identifies instances of good practice where placement activity has been seen as particularly effective.

2.133 This aspect of provision is clearly seen as important and is taken seriously by the College. The arrangements in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.134 The review team reviewed a range of College documentation related to the provision, support and review of work placements. The team also met students and staff to test their understanding of the operation of the learning and teaching arrangements and resources, their management, and the policies, processes and procedures that support them.

2.135 The College's only arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than itself are for the provision of work placements that are formal elements of programmes of study. The College has a strategic commitment to this aspect of work and the principles for its management, as set out clearly in documentation the review team reviewed, are implemented securely and managed effectively.

2.136 Students the review team met spoke highly of the College's professional networks and discipline-related support, and the employment related aspects of provision, including work placements.

2.137 Staff the review team met confirmed that externality was vital to the College's intention to produce employable graduates, and confirmed the provision of briefing packs for providers, and processes for gaining feedback on students' performance that are seen by programme leaders and feed into monitoring and feedback. Staff also confirmed the use of the work placement handbook and the supportive role played by tutors, but emphasised that student independence in the arrangement and management of work placements is encouraged.

2.138 The review team heard that tutors and programme leaders' responsibilities included supporting the student actively to ensure that they had sufficient advice on the placement and that it was aligned with their needs.

2.139 Staff also confirmed that, although the visual arts programme does not include work placements, alternative work-related opportunities were provided in the course, including the opportunity to submit for open public exhibitions at the College.

2.140 Academic staff whom the review team met confirmed that the process of considering work placements commenced very early in the academic year, or in previous year for two-year courses, and that staff felt that they had responsibilities to support students. Staff also needed to safeguard the long-term relationship with providers - it was therefore important to find a good fit for the student. They felt that the Work Placement Policy was very clear on roles and responsibilities. They also confirmed that they offer support through such means as weekly emails and in some cases making visits.

2.141 Support staff confirmed that tutors were mainly involved in managing and supporting work placements, but that the Academic Registrar supports students, and gives advice on health and safety and on applying for bursaries or travel allowances. The library also still supports students when on placement.

2.142 The review team found the arrangements for the provision of employment-related experiences, in particular work placements, represent a major strategic commitment by the College, that all arrangements for the support of this activity are well designed, and that the opportunities provided make an effective contribution to the educational experience of students. The strategic, professional, well supported and thoroughly embedded approach to the provision of effective work placements is **good practice**.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.144 The College does not offer research degrees, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.146 All of the Expectations relating to the College's quality of student learning opportunities are met with low risk and there are no recommendations in this area

2.147 There are three features of good practice identified in this section relating to the strategic, professional and practice-led approach to teaching, which is effectively supported by ongoing research and development; the excellent, discipline-specific and professionally informed use of resources in both formal learning spaces and the wider institution to promote high quality education; and the strategic, professional, well supported and thoroughly embedded approach to the provision of work placements.

2.148 There is one affirmation relating to the work being undertaken by the College to improve the timing and quality of summative feedback.

2.149 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 has developed a Public Information Policy, Social Media Policy and a statement of data protection guidance for students, which serve as the framework for the way in which information is provided and for the way in which information held about students is managed.

3.2 The College intranet and website carries a wide range of general information about the College, including leadership and management, committee structures, governance, regulations and assessment principles. Detailed documentation is held about programmes and course fees. The management of the student intranet is the responsibility of the Academic Office, while the College website is overseen by the marketing department.

3.3 The College's most widespread means of communicating with the public is via the recently redesigned website. The website is managed by the marketing team, working closely with the Academic Office to ensure all published information is accurate and consistently presented. The Academic Office works closely with programme tutors and the marketing team to produce the annual prospectus and copy for the College website; there is a sign-off process for public information.

3.4 The process for applying for entry is clearly set out in the Admissions section of the website for all potential applicants, and application deadlines, minimum entry requirements, fees information and guidance on completion of the application form are all provided. The College claims to ensure that potential students have a clear sense of the academic environment that they will be entering and the level of support that is made available to them.

3.5 The conditions of the College's partnership with the University require that recruitment materials be reviewed and approved by the Academic Development and Quality Enhancement Office; the College follows very closely the requirement that any programmes that have not received formal validation from the University should only be promoted for the purposes of recruitment under strict conditions.

3.6 Prospective students have access to bursary and scholarship information through the College website, and funding opportunities through the Foundation and from other sources are listed with full detail.

3.7 All students have access to the College intranet, which serves as a wide-ranging repository for the key academic documents and covers all aspects of student experience by signposting information about social and cultural activities. A comprehensive course handbook is produced each academic year as a reference to arrangements for the academic provision, information about work placements, an overview of the academic appeals process, and student responsibilities in relation to personal information and communications. The handbook sets out arrangements for programme monitoring, quality assurance and student representation across the College's committees.

3.8 The effectiveness of the provision of information to students is monitored through the annual student questionnaire. The development of the student intranet as a single repository of information for students has been ongoing since 2012, and the College has continued to invest in expertise and infrastructure. This development has been subject to ongoing evaluation by both the Information Systems Steering Group (ISSG) and a series of student focus groups.

3.9 Upon successful completion of their studies, students on validated programmes receive the certificate issued by the University, and a diploma supplement, which indicates the awarding institution, access requirements, the academic level of the qualification and the grades received for each unit of study, together with the final result of the student's programme.

3.10 Graduates are added to the College's list of alumni. Alumni receive communications about College events and developments, and case studies of alumni. An alumni focus group has been established to consider how this provision might be enhanced in the future and to reflect on how alumni networks can be better developed and supported.

3.11 The College works with various forms of social media to promote the College, and current and former students and their work and skills where appropriate. An Internet, Email and Social Media Policy is in place, setting out the acceptable parameters of using such forms of communication.

3.12 In addition to the University's regulations, which are published on the University website, the College's own framework for academic standards and quality is maintained in the Generic Document, which is posted on the student intranet and regularly updated to reflect formal changes made as a consequence of University validations and College committee approved changes. The Academic Office ensures that the version of the Generic Document that is available on the student intranet is that which has been approved by the University.

3.13 The College Annual Monitoring Report is made available on the student intranet alongside the College action plan, which captures the enhancement actions planned in response to a range of internal and external review mechanisms; minutes of all deliberative committees are also available. Through these means the College claims that it is confident that information about the processes it uses to maintain and enhance the quality and standards of its provision is available to internal stakeholders.

3.14 The arrangements described would allow the Expectation to be met.

3.15 The review team reviewed a range of College documentation related to the design, provision, management and review of information about learning opportunities at the College. The team also met students and staff to test their understanding of the operation of the arrangements for information, their management, and the policies, processes and procedures that support them.

3.16 The documents, policies and procedures the review team reviewed provide an effective basis for operation, and the arrangements for the management of information are secure and effective. The College's data protection guidance for students clearly states how their personal data is managed and how it may be passed on to legitimate third parties within the terms of the *Data Protection Act*. Any student has the right to request to see records that the College holds about them.

3.17 Staff the review team met confirmed the College's commitment to the effective management of information. In addition, the CEO noted that, in a previous role, he had been the College's Data Protection Manager, so had a good operational understanding of this

area. He confirmed that he had recently attended a legal update, and considered the College's position as a charity as well as an educational establishment. He also explained that the website had been overhauled recently with the intention of being transparent and outward facing with policies and procedures. He confirmed that the College had reflected on the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance and taken legal advice, both with the University and independently, and that this advice had fed into the web development project.

3.18 Senior staff whom the review team met also confirmed that the College had reflected on the CMA guidance and taken advice. They noted that they had worked with the University on this during the annual partnership meeting, and so knew what the University was planning to do and what they needed to do to comply. Staff felt that the advice they had taken on their public information, and an extensive mapping exercise with the marketing department, had improved clarity around terms and conditions in public information.

3.19 Support staff whom the review team met confirmed that the management of the student intranet is the responsibility of the Academic Office, while the College website is overseen by the marketing department. They considered that there is a robust sign-off process for outward information involving a first layer of sign-off that then went upwards to the Director of Marketing, the Director of Education and the CEO. They also confirmed the CMA work and the acquisition of external legal advice. It was noted that the student intranet had gone through a lot of change; a Student Intranet Focus Group has led to changes in content and functionality, including reducing navigation. Students had asked for access to the intranet from a direct link and that was put in place.

3.20 In October 2015 students were asked for feedback on the effectiveness of the induction programme through a survey, and 85 per cent of students confirmed that the information and materials provided were effective. Students whom the review team met confirmed that information on academic regulations was provided as part of induction and that they knew where to find documentation. They felt that documents are clear and that staff are happy to clarify and to correct matters in response to student feedback. Assessment information was also felt to be clear and students indicated that all assessments were scheduled in advance and introduced at induction, with information provided on dates and assessment requirements. Students were also clear about the complaints and appeals process and explained that information was provided at induction, in the handbook, and on the intranet. They were aware of the right to appeal against admissions decisions, and one student was aware of someone using the process successfully. They also confirmed that the mitigating circumstances material was easy to navigate.

3.21 Students noted that the information they had seen about the College and the course in advance of attendance was accurate, that everything was as described, and that they considered the open days to be very good. They confirmed that the College is working constantly on improvements to the intranet and website, and gave examples of progress, such as improving access from smart phones. Students confirmed that the College addresses issues when they arise, that there are regular IT focus meetings where student feedback was taken on board, and that IT staff are very responsive.

3.22 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

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

3.24 The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this section.

3.25 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 development plan, approved by the Trustees in 2014, sets out the goals for the College, including the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The development plan is articulated in the College Enhancement Strategy adopted by senior management in 2015. The Enhancement Strategy sets out plans to develop clear course provision pathways, building on the current staff expertise and resources, so as to expand and enhance learning and progression opportunities. The teaching infrastructure is an identified priority, including supporting staff to gain teaching qualifications to help further develop teaching and learning quality.

4.2 Student feedback plays a key role in helping the College to identify areas for improvement, both through surveys and through student contributions to school boards, the Student Forum and the Academic Board. Feedback provided by external examiners and programme advisers, along with staff views, are considered as part of annual monitoring process and factored into action plans, which support the development and enhancement of teaching and assessment.

4.3 The College has developed a number of effective relationships with national and professional bodies, including the British Library and English Heritage, building on the work, reputation and legacy of the College's founder Edward James, a renowned collector of books and works of art. Students have access to in-house collections of rare documents and artefacts. Three strategic research groups covering tapestry, conservation and the Edward James legacy have helped support two research symposia in 2015, and have enhanced and developed the College's research profile, and thereby the expertise of teaching staff and the range of artefacts available to students.

4.4 The College has identified a number of areas for enhancement, including teaching quality, student support and the learning environment. The Teaching and Learning Strategy includes enhancement priorities linked to integration of theory and practice, and providing more opportunities for students to develop professional practice skills. The opening up of the Foundation collection to students has enhanced learning resources. The College bursaries system provides opportunities for students to travel and spend time studying a wider range of artefacts, including through work placements in high profile organisations. The development of these initiatives is overseen and supported by the Teaching and Learning Forum.

4.5 Building on the Annual Monitoring Report requirements, the College has developed an Institutional Action Plan that draws together identified opportunities for enhancement emerging from individual programmes and school reports. The priorities identified include the enhancement of teaching strategies and delivery, further clarification of assessment requirements, and more constructive written feedback. Progress and improvements are monitored by the Academic Quality Committee and the Teaching and Learning Committee, and oversight is maintained by the Academic Board.

4.6 Individual schools also establish their priorities for enhancement, including, for example, the need for greater consistency of information provided to students, as set out in individual school Annual Monitoring Reports and action plans. A part-time member of staff with expertise in the use of learning technology has been appointed to support the

development of the College learning environment and the available range of materials to support students' learning. Staff development within the College is linked to key priorities, including the improvement of assessment feedback and supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

4.7 Peer teaching observations are undertaken once every two years as a minimum and generally annually and outcomes linked to performance appraisal. Peer observations enable the sharing and further development of good practice. Use of visiting lecturers and access to cross-discipline workshops, short courses and the artist in residence programme enhance the range of learning opportunities available to students.

4.8 The Enhancement Strategy, and range of networks and events in place, would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.9 The review team reviewed the Enhancement Strategy, Employee Learning and Development Strategy, evidence of training events, and evidence of the use of professional networks to develop and enhance provision. The team also met staff and students to explore how provision is assured and enhanced. Students confirmed that the intranet has been developed to provide them with access to a wider range of information and guidance, and that they are well supported by staff and by visiting practitioners.

4.10 The review team was provided with evidence of symposia and short courses that are accessible to students and allow them to further explore their subject discipline.

4.11 The College has made good use of professional networks, programme advisers and visiting lectures to enhance the quality of the student learning experience, which has been commented on favourably by external examiners. The use of student and external examiner feedback informs priorities for improvement in the programme and institution action plans. A number of external events and placements also offer students access to a wide range of learning activities, which serve to broaden their understanding and develop their skills. Access to the research networks linked to individual specialism practices supports ongoing enhancement and development of employability skills.

4.12 Staff development serves to support and develop good practice in teaching and learning, including supporting students with learning difficulties and developing more effective feedback practices. Staff are provided with in-house events as well as access to external training offered by the University to support enhancement in pedagogy.

4.13 The College has a clear strategy for enhancement, which is effectively supported by events and the use of external expertise.

4.14 The College has a clear structure of deliberative meetings, which discuss and review areas for enhancement, and actions plans, which set out College and programme development priorities. Annual Monitoring Reports allow the College to track progress against recommendations and to consider how the quality of learning and teaching can be enhanced.

4.15 The links with external professional and national bodies clearly enhance opportunities for students to work with external experts and to gain information and support, which helps develop professional practice in the areas of conservation, books and tapestries. Work with the British Library and English Heritage has resulted in well attended symposia, and offered opportunities to listen to and interact with professionals and develop sector based understanding of current priorities. The College also uses its network contacts to identify opportunities for work placements with well-known organisations.

4.16 The availability of items from the Foundation collection and the University resources has provided a valuable enhancement to learning resources.

4.17 The partnership with the University provides access to additional expertise and support to development enhancements. In the case of dyslexia support the College responded to events and feedback led by students, and has invited a member of University staff to run a workshop on diversity and differentiation in teaching and learning.

4.18 Staff are encouraged to access the short course provision delivered by experts at the College as part of their continuing professional development. Staff are also encouraged to undertake research as part of ongoing scholarly development, and to work towards gaining teaching qualifications.

4.19 The College has a clearly defined and embedded Enhancement Strategy, which supports staff to undertake scholarly activities as well as developing their pedagogical skills. Students benefit from access to high quality resources and external venues as part of their programme, which they greatly appreciate. 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

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

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

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

5 Commentary on theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 In identifying its innovations in promoting the employability and entrepreneurial skills of students the College works with the position established in its overarching strategic mission and purpose, and uses a range of tools, resources and initiatives to further its aims in this area, including curriculum design; learning and teaching delivery; the specialist academic staff and technicians responsible for supporting it in practical, theoretical and professional domains; data evaluation and response; and the use of specialist professional networks and environments, including those related to alumni.

5.2 The College consults with such stakeholders as the Institute of Conservation to ensure that its academic provision is fit for purpose, and takes a very close interest in, and contributes to, reports and surveys that are published by the conservation and craft sector. It believes that its consideration of such evidence supports the view that the College profile, and the range of programmes offered, means that it is well placed to capitalise on its existing reputation to deliver the training and education that the sector requires.

5.3 The College presents the example of research undertaken to support the development of the proposed MA in Collections Care and Conservation Management as a case study that illustrates how the College works with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the new programme meets the requirements of the heritage sector in such a way that graduates would be able to find employment on completion. Specific course aims were identified that were then benchmarked against industry documents.

5.4 In describing the ways in which its employability initiatives work in helping graduates get and keep jobs, the College provides evidence around a range of strategic and ethical commitments, validation and review activity. It also cites activity in the design of programmes using professional advisers and independent programme advisers in addition to external examiners. The College also discusses activity in learning and teaching and curriculum elements, particularly its engagement with a range of external stakeholders, its employment of skilled practitioners in teaching, the use of tutor's specialist networks and work placement activity.

5.5 In describing the ways in which employers are involved in the delivery and development of the curriculum as a means of providing externality in initiatives that enhance student employability, the College provides evidence of this through placement activity as identified above, and in discussion of work with sector specialists in conservation and in enhancing professional contacts for students.

5.6 In detailing how actively it engages with employers/industry representatives in the development, design, assessment and review of its higher education provision, the College provides evidence in its mission of the further development of good practice in its work on externality in relation to benchmarking; the employment of programme advisers; the use of external networks in its work with external advisers in programme design, for example the proposed MA in Collections Care and Conservation Management; and in student engagement with wider external networks.

5.7 The review team met a group of students from across a range of programmes. They spoke extremely positively about the discipline specialist dimension of their study, in some cases (Book Conservation, Clock Conservation) describing it as unique. Students described that their interests in careers in history and crafts could effectively be pursued at the College since it provided access to the necessary practical skills and range of environments. The view was expressed that the College 'offered everything', and students also expressed the

view that programmes were academically rigorous and provided the opportunity to build new skills.

5.8 Students understood the importance of the College professional network and appreciated the fact that staff are professionals who have an understanding of what it is to be a professional artist and who could assist them to follow professional standards. They considered this to be one of the significant factors in the high employability record of the College and its high standing. Students also spoke positively of the professional studio environment that supports practice-led work, and appreciated the workshop tours and the introductions to equipment.

5.9 In respect of their contact with the external professional world, students spoke positively about their visits to museums, retailers and other professional environments, such as archives, and of their visiting lecturers and speakers, who helped them to be very well informed on new developments. The example of a workshop on plastics conservation from world-leading expert was offered. Students also noted that external examiners talked to them about career plans, and confirmed the value of work placements.

5.10 There were very supportive comments on the quality of teaching staff - all tutors on the MA Creative Writing programme are published authors. The employment of associate tutors who work in the field was valued in allowing students to gain a view of real world problems, and they were appreciative of such examples as the tutor who works at the Victoria and Museum, who allowed them 'backstage' access to see a conservator at work. The artists in residence were also valued.

5.11 Students spoke positively of the school-wide end-of-year exhibitions that drew experts from professional world, and of the opportunities for Visual Arts students to exhibit works in the open house exhibition.

5.12 Finally, students were aware of the alumni focus group and its value in having alumni returning for continuing professional development, and for other events, such as the conference for new graduates. They appreciated being able to hear alumni success stories in the Conservation department blogs.

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 22-25 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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