Higher Education Review of Weston College

April 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Weston College. The review took place from 26 April to 28 April 2016 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Geoffrey Elliott
- Mr Mike Ridout
- Mrs Diane Cleves (student reviewer).

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

In Higher Education Review, the QAA review team:

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

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

In reviewing Weston College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

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

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

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review web pages:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/higher-education-review.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Weston College

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- 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 Weston College.

- The use of student and employer involvement in design, development and validation, which is particularly effective in ensuring that programmes are focused on their needs (Expectation B1).
- The effective processes in place to support higher education teaching practices, which ensure the distinctiveness of the quality of learning opportunities (Expectations B3 and B4).
- The professional and proactive approach of the higher education support team, which enables student development and achievement (Expectations B4 and B2).
- The close working relationship with the awarding bodies, which facilitates a reflective and responsive approach to assessment design and practice (Expectations B6 and B1).

Theme: Student Employability

Employability is central to the ethos of Weston College; the Higher Education Strategic Plan focuses on the responsiveness of the higher education curriculum in meeting the needs of employers and the local and regional economy, and developing skills to allow students to enter the world of work or self-employment. The College offers a range of vocational and industry-focused foundation degrees and final year honours top-up degrees, the development of which is based on an internal programme development procedure that addresses market demand, competitor analysis and employer need. Curriculum content is determined through stakeholder forums that include representation by employers and students, thus determining and ensuring vocational relevance of the curriculum content. Opportunities are identified and taken within the programmes offered to deliver employability skills and apply theoretical knowledge to professional contexts through a range of activities and initiatives. Employers and business owners, across subject disciplines, provide students with an insight into industry/sector expectations and skills requirements. Students benefit from staff maintaining close links with their vocational areas and/or their involvement in developing their own professional practice. The College also draws on links with past students who are either working for local employers or running their own businesses.

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

About Weston College

Weston College (the College) is a further and higher education college based in Weston-super-Mare in North Somerset, which offers further and higher education programmes across a range of subject areas and attracts students from a wide geographical area covering 145 square miles. The College has 6,387 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, of whom 822 are registered on higher education programmes, including foundation degrees, final year honours top-up degrees and one master's programme. The College has three campuses: the largest, Knightstone Campus, is situated close to the seafront in the town centre. This building accommodates the University Centre, which offers facilities for higher education students on business, computing, humanities, performing arts and science-based programmes. The University Campus is situated close to the town centre and houses specialist facilities for students on art, design, media and music programmes. The South West Skills Campus is situated to the north of the town and accommodates the Centre of Excellence for Construction and Engineering.

The College's mission for higher education is 'To deliver an outstanding higher education experience, enabling success and inspiring ambition'. This is supported by eight strategic aims: the development and delivery of high quality higher education that reflects the needs of students, employers, partner universities, and the local and national economy; the recruitment of high calibre students to ensure the ongoing viability of higher education programmes, with a target of 893 FTE students for the next academic year; engagement with the Quality Code and the achievement of 'commended' through Higher Education Review; focus and enhancement of the student experience through acting on student feedback and increased student engagement; development of staff skills, scholarship and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, including the use of technology-enhanced learning. There is also focus on graduate employability and the development of the skills needed to ensure individuals are ready and able to enter the world of work or self-employment; delivery of quality enhancement that enables continuous improvement, standards to be safeguarded and higher education to flourish; and continuing support for widening participation by providing increased opportunities for a wider range of students to participate in higher education programmes.

The strategic direction of the College originates from the Principal and Chief Executive, and the College Corporation, and is overseen by governors through the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee (HECQC). The Corporate Management Team is the main policy making and strategic body within the College. This is chaired by the Principal and Chief Executive and attended by the Senior Vice-Principal Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, the Assistant Principal for Higher Education and five other senior managers. The Assistant Principal for Higher Education is required to produce an annual strategic planning response for higher education, which is discussed and approved by this body. The Higher Education Board of Study (HEBS) meets five times each year and has responsibility for the review and reporting of issues relating to standards and quality in higher education. This body considers programme monitoring, the quality of teaching, scholarly activity reports, student feedback, statistical data and analysis; makes recommendations to the Higher Education Management Team, Corporate Management Team and the HECQC, and acts as a validation forum for faculty annual monitoring. The Higher Education Directorate Management Team meets on a monthly basis and has responsibility for the strategic and operational aspects of higher education at the College. It reports and makes recommendations to HEBS, the Corporate Management Team and the HECQC. In addition, monthly partnership meetings are held with the awarding bodies where strategic, operational and developmental issues in relation to higher education are discussed.

Since the QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review in 2011, the College has undergone significant development in terms of the management and support structures for higher education, and in relation to the type and number of higher education programmes offered. This has manifested in the introduction of 10 additional programmes and a significant increase in student numbers. The College submitted a successful bid as part of the HEFCE Student Number Control 'core and margin' process in 2012, and currently directly funded students represent 39 per cent of total student numbers. Since 2012 the higher education sector has seen significant increases in tuition fees and the College has also increased fees to a level of £7,500 per annum, thus requiring submission of an Access Agreement to the Office for Fair Access. Changes have been made to governance, management and infrastructure to support and raise the profile of higher education within the College. This includes a new post of Assistant Principal for Higher Education, who is a member of the Corporate Management Team. Since the last QAA review the University of Bath has withdrawn from all franchised provision, and this was managed by 'teaching out' on relevant programmes and the redesign and transfer of provision to the University of the West of England Bristol.

In response to a rapidly changing higher education environment the College undertakes an annual risk assessment and analysis. This has highlighted two key challenges in relation to student recruitment and Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) requirements. The removal of the cap on student numbers has created a significant increase in competition for the College from other colleges and universities. Increased higher education recruitment is one of the strategic aims of the College and this is enabled by a set of key performance indicators. In order to facilitate this the College has appointed two specific higher education posts, which deal with recruitment, sales and marketing respectively. Clarification by the CMA in March 2015 of the impact of consumer protection law upon higher education resulted in the College undertaking a comprehensive audit of public information, and from this a set of higher education terms and conditions were developed. These set out the rights and obligations of the student and the College in relation to issues such as admissions, cancellation, enrolment, programmes of study, data and information, fees, changes to programmes, services, facilities and intellectual property.

The College works in partnership with two awarding bodies, Bath Spa University and the University of the West of England to deliver both directly and indirectly funded provision. Programmes accredited by Bath Spa University include 12 foundation degrees – Creative Art and Professional Studies; Graphic Design; Film and Media Arts Production; Photography in Practice; Music Production; Performing Arts; Musical Theatre; Popular Music; Counselling; Early Years; Early Childhood Studies and Tourism Management. There are seven final year honours top-up degrees, which include Business Management with Sustainability; Contemporary Art and Professional Studies; Counselling; Early Years Education; Graphic Design; Musical Theatre and Performing Arts. Programmes accredited by the University of the West of England cover 10 foundation degrees in Animal Management; Applied Computing; Business with Management; Care Management in the Community; Games and Animation Production; Health and Social Care Practice; Inclusive Practice; Public and Environmental Health; Sports Studies; and Uniformed and Public Services. The University of the West of England also accredits three final year honours top-up degrees – Applied Computing; Public and Environmental Health; and Uniformed and Public Services – as well as an MA in Education. All programmes have been developed and validated in conjunction with the partner universities to meet the needs of the College, students and employers. The College works with one professional statutory regulatory body, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, in relation to the Public and Environmental Health programmes.

The College was subject to an Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review by QAA in October 2011. The review resulted in 11 areas of good practice identified pertaining to: strategic and administrative leadership; the use of the academic infrastructure; use of

benchmarking data to facilitate continuous improvement; links with employers; quality assurance mechanisms; staff development and the promotion of scholarly activity; peer review systems; learning resources strategy; information for students; and independent audit of programme handbooks. The College continues to build on the areas of good practice identified and has developed further good practice, in particular, the use of health checks, which are mapped against the Quality Code. The review highlighted three desirable recommendations related to the development of potential for employer engagement; the intended impact of scholarly activity in terms of student learning; and clarity of information provided to students on additional fees. The College has addressed these by building upon employer engagement in curriculum development and annual reporting on employer engagement, developing and updating the Higher Education Research and Scholarly Activity Policy and Procedures in conjunction with annual reporting on the impact of scholarly activity, and making students aware of additional costs through the Higher Education Admissions Communication Plan. The College also complies with the CMA guidance and all relevant information is on the College website.

Explanation of the findings about Weston College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a brief glossary at the end of this report. A fuller glossary of terms is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the review method, also on the QAA website.

Explanation of the findings about Weston College

1   Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1   The College provides 10 foundation degrees, three honours top-up degrees and a master's degree, accredited by the University of the West of England, and 12 foundation degrees and seven honours top-up degrees accredited by Bath Spa University. Programme development and approval is the responsibility of the awarding bodies, together with aligning qualifications with the FHEQ and structuring programmes around modules and credits.

1.2   Academic agreements and processes are in place with both awarding bodies, and these set out the approaches for ensuring programmes at the College meet the appropriate higher education framework. The College also ensures staff are aware of the awarding bodies' requirements, and the purposes of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. The agreements, systems and processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3   The review team tested the Expectation by considering the documentation that informed programme approval and monitoring. The team also met a range of staff from the College and representatives from the two awarding bodies.

1.4   The College Higher Education Programme Development Policy and Procedures articulate clearly the internal processes for identifying and approving, by HEBS, a potential programme prior to approaching one of its awarding bodies with a proposal. The College

works closely with the appropriate awarding body in determining the content of the programme, and ensuring qualifications and learning outcomes align with the appropriate levels of the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements, and meet the relevant awarding body's academic regulatory frameworks. The College provided documentary evidence illustrating the process followed for the BA (Hons) Business Management and Sustainability, and staff articulated their involvement with the College and awarding body processes for the development of the FdA Professional and Commercial Dance. Staff also confirm the close working relationship with the appropriate awarding body staff and the availability of support, training and information available to underpin their role in programme development.

1.5   Threshold academic standards are secured overall as the College is delivering programmes and modules approved by its awarding bodies' processes, which are aligned to national frameworks and standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): 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

1.6   The College does not award qualifications but works with its awarding bodies to deliver the programmes it offers. The College works within specified academic regulations for all provision accredited by the University of the West of England. For programmes accredited by Bath Spa University the College works with university regulations for indirectly funded programmes, and with university-approved College Academic Regulations: Assessment for directly funded programmes. There are clear higher education reporting lines within the College that ensures it complies with the requirements of its awarding bodies. The agreement, processes, regulations and reporting lines in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.7   The review team tested the Expectation by considering documentation that sets out responsibilities and reporting lines, together with meeting a range of staff. The College follows the relevant awarding body's academic regulations for the award of credit and qualifications. In the case of directly funded programmes approved by Bath Spa University, the College Academic Regulations: Assessment are followed, and these regulations are reviewed annually. The relevant regulations set out the responsibilities and processes to be followed by the College and these are adhered to.

1.8   Monthly partnership meetings are held with the College Higher Education Directorate and each awarding body to ensure that academic frameworks and processes are being followed in full by programme teams.

1.9   The Higher Education Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures 2014-17 and the Governance, Management and Meeting Structures for Higher Education describe clearly the reporting lines in terms of reference for each group in managing the College's responsibilities for assuring academic standards. The College is also proactive in ensuring that its policies, processes and procedures are cross-referenced to the Quality Code, and health checks are undertaken against each chapter.

1.10   The College manages its responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards in line with the requirements of its awarding bodies. 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

1.11   The College is responsible for delivering programmes in accordance with its awarding bodies' regulations, and produces definitive programme documents through handbooks and programme specifications. The College takes responsibility for using programme specification reference points to maintain academic standards in delivery and assessment.

1.12   Both university partners provide clear guidelines and documentation stating the respective roles and responsibilities of the College with regard to definitive records. Such arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13   The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of programme specifications, unit handbooks, the College website, programme validation and review documents, and through discussions in meetings with students and staff.

1.14   The College has responsibility for ensuring that definitive records are managed appropriately for staff and student use. The College produces definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected student achievement for each qualification delivered at the College. Definitive information is made available to students through student handbooks and programme specifications, which are available for students on the College virtual learning environment (VLE).

1.15   Changes to assessment in terms of format, structure or submission is determined by all parties. Amendments to university partners' qualifications are undertaken by the awarding partner in conjunction with the College, which may input into their development.

1.16   Definitive programme information at the College is accessible and appropriately managed. 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

1.17   The College does not have degree awarding powers but delivers its higher education provision through two awarding bodies: the University of the West of England and Bath Spa University. All provision is subject to the respective awarding body's validation and periodic review policies, processes and procedures. The two awarding bodies are responsible within their regulatory academic frameworks for confirming that programmes are designed and validated in line with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the *Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement* and the FHEQ.

1.18   The review team heard and read evidence in validation documentation that the College follows an internal planning and approval process that precedes any discussion and engagement with the awarding bodies. The review team found that the College's Higher Education Programme Development Policy and Procedures document makes clear the College's approach to proposing programmes and engaging with awarding body processes and procedures. The review team heard and found evidence in meetings with staff and awarding bodies that College staff work closely in partnership with the awarding bodies to produce documentation in line with the academic frameworks of the awarding bodies. External examiners confirmed in their reports that the threshold standards are appropriate for each award and in accordance with the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.19   The review team evaluated the processes, procedures and practices with regard to the design and approval of taught programmes to ensure that academic standards are set at the right level and meet threshold standards. This was achieved through scrutiny of the College's academic policies and procedures, external examiner reports, and the process of engagement by staff with awarding body academic frameworks for validation and periodic review. The review team found evidence in this documentation of clear understanding among staff of the different awarding body processes for programme approval, and the importance and use of learning outcomes in programme design and assessment setting. The review team heard and found evidence of programme development teams being established in the College to deliver validation documentation in partnership with the awarding bodies. This process of programme design and approval, and the setting of benchmark standards, normally includes students and other external stakeholders in the process of design and approval of programmes designed in line with Subject Benchmark Statements and foundation degree expectations.

1.20   The review team discussed and read evidence of the effectiveness of the involvement of external scrutiny in programme design and approval, particularly in relation to the setting of standards, and found this to be apparent in both the design and approval processes and practices. The review team found clear evidence of the effective involvement of staff at the College, working in partnership with the staff at the awarding bodies, to design, author and present documentation for validation. The processes, procedures and supporting policy documentation is clearly understood by staff and used effectively in the design of programmes and modules at appropriate levels of the FHEQ, and other external benchmarks presented for validation and periodic review to the awarding bodies.

1.21   The College, through its awarding bodies, ensures that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification, and are in accordance with the awarding body and the College's own frameworks and regulations. 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

1.22   The College's programmes are validated and approved by its two awarding bodies. The College has delegated responsibility for designing assessments and ensuring that learning outcomes are set at the relevant level in line with its own assessment regulations and the awarding bodies' academic frameworks. Students have access to these academic frameworks with regard to credit, progression and achievement of awards on the VLE. Assessment decisions are confirmed at subject boards (for Bath Spa University), field boards (for the University of the West of England), and programme boards for Bath Spa University-accredited College directly funded provision, then on to the relevant award boards of the awarding bodies.

1.23   The review team found evidence that the College recognises the importance of defining and assessing learning outcomes, and these are defined in student handbooks in the required templates of the relevant awarding body. The review team heard and read evidence from programme approval documentation of outcomes being confirmed as part of the programme validation process and further evidence that these are in alignment with the relevant qualification descriptor of the FHEQ and other external threshold benchmark standards. The review team found evidence of clear understanding among staff of the different awarding body processes for programme approval, and the importance and use of learning outcomes in programme design and assessment design and setting. The review team found evidence of students being made aware of information to complete assessment, along with guidance to staff on assessment setting, marking and feedback. External examiners, on behalf of the awarding bodies, confirm in their reports that the threshold standards are appropriate and set at the correct level. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.24   The review team evaluated the processes, procedures and practices with regard to the definition and setting of threshold standards within module and programme design, and the definition of learning outcomes, through scrutiny of external examiner reports, meetings with staff, and scrutinising the quality management processes for programme approval and annual monitoring. The review team found evidence of clear understanding among staff of the importance and use of learning outcomes in programme design and assessment setting, and the use of templates to inform students of progress and performance.

1.25   The review team discussed the involvement of external scrutiny in defining standards and found this to be effectively understood by staff and students with regard to the setting and assessment of standards. The review team heard and found evidence of the effective use of link tutors at the awarding bodies, working closely with the College to review assessments and support staff in setting standards. The review team found evidence of the effective use, review and approval of learning outcomes in assessment by link tutors and external examiners with clear responsiveness by staff at the College. The review team found

processes in place, supported by appropriate policies and regulations, to ensure that assessments are set at the appropriate level to be effective in enabling students to meet the intended learning outcomes for their programmes.

1.26   The College, through its awarding bodies, ensures reference to external threshold standards, and that credit and qualifications are only awarded where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.27   The College works within each awarding body's regulations, policies and processes with regard to annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes. The process and practices for annual monitoring and action planning are outlined and published in the College's Higher Education Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures. The College manages its responsibilities by implementing annual monitoring at programme, faculty and – in the case of one awarding body – at institutional level. The College uses the relevant quality assurance monitoring templates and timescales of the awarding bodies. The College considers annual monitoring reports (AMRs) at HEBS before the reports are then further considered by the awarding bodies as part of their annual monitoring and periodic review policies and processes.

1.28   The review team found evidence of action planning in the annual monitoring processes and these actions being produced, monitored and considered at faculty and College level. The review team found evidence that the annual monitoring processes of the College require feedback from employers and students. There was evidence presented of AMRs reflecting upon key programme performance data, external examiner comments and data from the National Student Survey and employability. The review team found evidence of AMRs and action plans being scrutinised at faculty management and institutional levels, through HEBS and through the Higher Education Quality Manager. The review team heard and found evidence that College staff work closely in partnership with the awarding bodies to produce annual monitoring documentation in line with the relevant academic frameworks of the awarding bodies. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.29   The review team evaluated the processes and practices with regard to annual monitoring, periodic review and quality assurance action planning, and found that action plans were effectively monitored by Higher Education Partnership Managers, faculties and HEBS. The review team found evidence of the awarding bodies providing evaluative feedback on their confidence placed with the College and their respective partnerships. The review team also found evidence of effective support, training and clear understanding among staff of the different awarding body processes for annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes. The team evaluated the use made by the College of AMRs and action plans, and found clear evidence of the effective involvement of staff in the processes and procedures. Supporting College quality assurance procedures and policies are clearly understood by staff and used effectively in the monitoring of programmes by the College and the awarding bodies. The review team found that periodic review ensures academic standards are being achieved and maintained, and that the College and awarding bodies have established effective processes and practices for annual monitoring and periodic review.

1.30   The College, through its awarding bodies, ensures that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented that 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. 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

1.31   External examiners are appointed and managed by the College's awarding bodies. External examiner reports are used extensively by the College as part of its quality assurance procedures. Clear policies and procedures set out the process for the receipt of and response to external examiner reports. The College also produces an overall annual report on feedback from external examiners, which is reported to HEBS.

1.32   The awarding bodies are responsible for ensuring appropriate external scrutiny during validation and periodic review, and the College complies with this requirement. In addition, the College has its own higher education programme development procedures. The processes and procedures used by the awarding bodies and the systems within the College for the use of external and independent expertise would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.33   In testing the Expectation the review team considered documentation relating to external examiners and programme approval. The team also held meetings with staff and students. The College engages with external examiners in accordance with its awarding bodies' requirements. External examiners, in ensuring that threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved, are involved in agreeing the content of examinations and discussions with programme teams regarding assessment. External examiners' reports are structured by awarding bodies to confirm the provision of sufficient assessment evidence to enable the role to be fulfilled and ensure that comparable judgements relating to academic standards are being made. Clear processes that comply with awarding bodies' requirements are in place within the College in order to respond to external examiners' reports.

1.34   The College maintains an understanding of the wider needs of employers and industry through its links with the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership and other employer groups. The College engages with employers and industry as part of its programme development procedures. Independent academic, employer and industry representation are required as part of the awarding bodies' validation and periodic review processes, and these are adhered to by the College.

1.35   The awarding bodies' processes and procedures, together with the College's systems, enable external and independent expertise to be used in ensuring that academic standards are set 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

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

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

1.37   All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low in all cases. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice in this area.

1.38   The approach to maintaining academic standards at the College is defined by the degree-awarding bodies. The College uses the established university academic frameworks, regulations and procedures. Staff are familiar with the responsibilities that are assigned to the College with regard to academic standards, and there is significant external engagement and oversight of standards through the awarding bodies and through the use of external examiners.

1.39   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies 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 Since the QAA IQER review in 2011, the College has introduced 10 additional higher education programmes with its awarding bodies. This expansion is in line with the College's published Higher Education Strategic Plan and overall College Strategic Plan. All higher education provision is subject to the respective awarding body's validation and approval policies, processes and procedures. Both awarding bodies are responsible within their regulatory academic frameworks for confirming that programmes are designed and validated in line with relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the *Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement* and the FHEQ. The College approach to programme proposal and approval, through the awarding bodies, is articulated in the published Higher Education Programme Development Policy and Procedures. Once a new programme idea has been agreed at faculty level the proposal is articulated in a proposal template and submitted to HEBS for consideration. If agreed by HEBS, the Assistant Principal for Higher Education discusses the proposal with the relevant awarding body. The College has established arrangements with both awarding bodies regarding programme development and approval.

2.2 The review team heard and read evidence that the College follows an internal planning and approval process, which precedes any discussion and engagement with the awarding bodies. The team heard and found evidence that College staff work closely in partnership with the awarding bodies to produce documentation in line with the academic frameworks of the awarding bodies, and receive appropriate training to engage with the awarding bodies' formal development processes and practices. The review team found evidence from approval documentation and validation reports of a clear process for programme proposal, design and approval. There was evidence from meetings and the approval documentation of a robust and well documented set of processes and procedures at both the College and the awarding bodies. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team evaluated and tested the effectiveness of the strategic and operational approaches to programme design, development and approval and found that the College, in partnership with the awarding bodies, has a comprehensive set of formal policies and practices to underpin the design and validation of programmes. The team heard and read evidence of extensive and effective involvement in the design and validation of programmes by both students and employers. There was evidence of a clear understanding among staff of the different awarding body processes for programme approval and the importance and use of external benchmarks and standards. In addition, there was evidence of effective training for staff to undertake programme design and engage in approval activity, with views considered from both students and employers. Programme development teams are established in the College to deliver validation documentation in partnership with the awarding bodies with appropriate training and guidance provided from the College and the awarding bodies.

2.4   The review team found that the processes, procedures and supporting policy documentation is clearly understood by staff and used effectively in the design of programmes and modules presented for validation. The team found that the College and awarding bodies in partnership have effective and established processes for the design, development and approval of higher education programmes. The review team discussed and read evidence of the involvement of external scrutiny in programme design and approval and found this to be apparent in both the design and approval processes, with effective use of students and employers to inform curriculum development. The use of student and employer involvement in design, development and validation, which is particularly effective in ensuring that programmes are focused on their needs, is **good practice**. The close working relationship with the awarding bodies is recognised as good practice in Expectation B6 but is also linked to this Expectation.

2.5   The College, through its awarding bodies, ensures that in discharging its responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards, and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, it operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.6   Admission to the College's higher education provision is through both UCAS and direct application to the College. The College process for admissions follows UCAS and the awarding bodies' procedures. The College introduced the Higher Education Academic Registry Team (HEART) to its application process to enable a helpful and informative transition for students into higher education. The College has trained staff who provide information, advice and guidance to students and prospective students. General admission principles are set out on the College's website. The College's approach to recruitment, selection and admission would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.7   To test the operational effectiveness of the College's admission processes the review team considered supporting documents, including policies and procedures, and training provided by HEART and the admissions team. Further information was gathered through discussions with staff and students.

2.8   The admissions process is reviewed by HEART from initial application and throughout the student journey. All prospective students have a number of options available to them in order to make a formal application for higher education programmes. The process for applying depends on the awarding body of the chosen programme. For University of West England and Bath Spa University programmes all applications for full-time programmes are made via UCAS. For indirectly funded provision, the application is made through the awarding partners. For directly funded provision, the application is processed by the College.

2.9   Entry requirements are noted on the website and UCAS point tariffs are provided. Following scrutiny of the application, applicants are provided with an offer of a place or given information on the next stage of the process. Applicants who are unsuccessful are given the opportunity to appeal against the decision. College staff keep up to date with changes and trends in admissions by attending UCAS conventions and other continuous professional development events. HEART works closely with students with a learning need and/or disability from the enrolment stage, and liaises with programme coordinators as well as the Additional Learning Support Team in order to ensure appropriate support is in place. Additional support for students is available in the form of a Higher Education Mental Health Specialist who provides both drop-in and bookable appointment services.

2.10   The review team met students who confirmed that they accessed the prospectus and programme details from the website; some students watched online videos and attended Open Days, while some internal students progressed from level 3 programmes within the College. The students the review team met found the admission process fit for purpose and straightforward. The time taken from application to students being offered a place is variable and dependent upon the nature of the programme, as some students may have to undergo an interview or audition.

2.11   The College has consistent procedures for liaising with its awarding bodies and awarding organisations in relation to admissions, and has effective admissions processes

that are understood by students and staff. 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

2.12 The College has a clear strategic commitment to delivering an outstanding higher education experience. The approach adopted to the delivery of higher education teaching and learning is reviewed regularly, and in September 2015 assessment was also included in the College's Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The Higher Education Student Charter sets out a commitment to provide high quality teaching and learning and develop students as independent learners. The College has developed higher education teaching spaces to create both physical and VLEs to foster independent learning. Encouragement is provided to staff to explore technology enhanced learning.

2.13 The College Recruitment Policy provides the framework for the effective recruitment of staff. This is supplemented by the Higher Education Staff Induction and Mentoring Policy and Procedures, together with an established system for peer observation of teaching. New staff are required to undertake a teaching qualification within the first two years of commencing employment and all staff are required to achieve Higher Education Academy recognition. There is a strong commitment to continuous professional development, and sharing good practice in promoting and evaluating scholarly activity. There is clear monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, which is reported to HEBS.

2.14 The processes and procedures in place to support teaching and learning and develop students as independent learners would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.15 In testing the Expectation the review team considered the notes of meetings, handbooks and documentation developed by the College. The review team also held meetings with a range of staff and students.

2.16 The Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is central to the delivery of teaching and learning at the College, and this document clearly sets out statements of intent that both demonstrate the College's commitment to teaching and learning and the standards expected of staff. The Strategy draws on the Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching* and the UK Professional Standards Framework, and was developed further in 2015 to include assessment.

2.17 The College places a strong emphasis on ensuring staff teaching on higher education programmes are competent to do so. New staff are recruited within the framework of the College's Recruitment Policy and specific information relating to higher education has been developed for inclusion in job descriptions. There is provision for awarding bodies to be involved in the recruitment process and agreeing the confirmation of the offer made to the successful applicant. All new staff are required to undertake a teaching qualification within two years of commencing employment and are also supported and mentored in their role. The College is also active in promoting Higher Education Academy accreditation to staff and this forms a key performance indicator within the Higher Education Strategic Plan 2014-17. Staff met by the review team described the benefits accruing from this accreditation.

2.18   Peer observation is well established and staff are provided with training to support their involvement in the process. An overview report is presented to HEBS and recommendations from this report inform professional development activity. Scholarly activity is effectively managed and promoted, and funding is made available centrally to support staff in their identified and agreed development. An annual Scholarly Activity Impact Report is produced by the Higher Education Directorate and shared with HEBS. This report considers the impact of scholarly activity on the student experience and informs higher education professional development events.

2.19   Teaching and learning is also underpinned by an overarching Higher Education Continuing Professional Development 2015-18 Policy and Procedures document. Professional development activities include higher education conferences that draw on external speakers with expertise in higher education pedagogy. In addition, there are specific higher education continuous professional development days that provide opportunities to share good practice, feedback from external examiners, peer observation of teaching, and output from scholarly activity. Staff spoke positively to the review team about the value of professional development, the cross-fertilisation of ideas arising from peer review, and the impact of scholarly activity on their teaching practice. Students met by the review team were also positive about their learning experience and this is also borne out by the 2015 National Student Survey results for teaching. The effective processes in place to support higher education teaching practices, which ensure the distinctiveness of the quality of learning, is **good practice**. This area of good practice is also linked to Expectation B4 in terms of enabling student development and achievement.

2.20   The College has made available a Technology Enhanced Learning Innovation Fund that has been used by staff to explore and develop ways of augmenting teaching and learning through the use of technology. Examples of initiatives include the use of virtual reality hardware for multimedia and gaming, and providing professional web hosting space for photography students. These developments are also supported by the Technology Enhanced Learning Officer. Performing arts and musical theatre students also took part in a live performance with students from the USA using integrated digital technology. Staff and students confirmed with the review team the College's approach and support for the use of technology and learning. In addition, students were very positive and appreciative of the VLE in supporting their programme of study and reinforcing their knowledge and understanding.

2.21   Opportunities are provided for students to receive feedback on their performance and take responsibility for their personal development. Tutorials are made available at module level for staff to feed back on assessment, and tutorials are also provided for students to review their overall performance. Students are able to access marks/grades through the relevant awarding body's VLE – students on directly funded Bath Spa University programmes make use of the College's electronic individual learning plan. Students met by the review team confirmed the usefulness of the tutorial support available.

2.22   The College has in place an overarching policy that provides a framework for ensuring the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment. In addition, there are a range of processes and procedures that ensure the competence of higher education teaching staff and the provision of learning opportunities that encourage students to develop independent learning skills. 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

2.23   The College has a strategic commitment to student success and supporting their transition into the world of work or self-employment. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place that support student development and achievement.

2.24   Students are supported pre-enrolment through the provision of study skills workshops and supporting documentation. Diagnostic screening is used on programmes to help identify learning support needs. Both new and returning students undertake an induction programme at the beginning of their programme, and existing higher education students are appointed as Freshers Angels to help students make the transition onto their programme.

2.25   The Higher Education Library Plus (HE.LP) Study Skills programme provides students with the framework to develop their academic study and writing skills. In addition, drop-in workshops are provided throughout the year to supplement this programme. Personal development planning is used to develop students' reflection and independent learning skills, as well as prepare them for employment.

2.26   There is a comprehensive range of welfare and pastoral support available. Careers education information and guidance is available, and supporting information can be accessed within the HE Student Zone on the VLE. In addition, an Employment Week is offered to provide advice and guidance on job search.

2.27   Students have access to a wide range of physical and virtual learning resources. Wireless access is available to allow students to use their own mobile devices. The HE.LP programme has developed a Higher Education Reading Strategy to assist in the provision and management of resources. The monitoring and evaluation of student support is reported to the Higher Education Management Team. The processes and procedures in place to support student development and achievement would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.28   In testing the Expectation the review team considered the notes of meetings, audits and the documentation developed by the College for use by staff and students. The team also held meetings with a range of staff and current and past students.

2.29   The College provides a full range of support to students covering pre-enrolment, transition onto their programme, their study on-programme and progression from their study. The Headstart Study Skills programme, delivered pre-enrolment, provides an introduction to higher level study, managing expectations and provides help with dealing, if needed, with anxiety or confidence issues. This programme has proved successful and will be available to all enrolling higher education students for summer 2016.

2.30   The Higher Education Student Charter sets out students' entitlements and responsibilities, and students met by the review team spoke positively about the value and clarity of the language used in this document. The Supporting Your Success booklet is clearly written and student focused, providing a comprehensive overview of the transition into higher education and the College, together with signposting students to the pastoral and academic support available. On starting their programme all students undertake a diagnostic initial assessment, which is used by teaching staff to inform their lecture programme and by

specialist support staff to identify if further diagnostic testing is needed. This was confirmed by staff and students met by the review team.

2.31   Central to the development of academic skills is the HE.LP Study Skills programme, which is delivered and managed by library staff. This structured programme of 10 compulsory sessions covers all aspects of higher education study to help students develop as autonomous learners and take responsibility for their academic conduct. Additional study skills drop-in sessions are available to students, together with peer support activities such as the Tech Genius Helpdesk Initiative. The Study Skills programme is supported by the availability of online learning materials on the VLE. Students confirmed to the review team the availability of the study support and help provided by the College in developing their academic skills, and spoke positively about the value of this in supporting their learning.

2.32   A full range of student support and welfare services, covering pastoral support, finance, careers, and accommodation, is provided by HEART. The Supporting Your Success booklet provides an accessible guide to the support available. In addition, there is information available on the College website and through the VLE within the Higher Education Zone. The College has also developed further the services available to students by the provision of autism and mental health support. Students informed the review team of the value and accessibility of this support, both to them personally and others on their programme.

2.33   Students are prepared for employment both within their programme of study and through, for example, professional development planning tutorials and activities such as the Employability Week and support for job skills within the Higher Education Student Zone. Careers advice is available to students and this has been augmented in response to student feedback, through the provision of careers support, available to all higher education students, using expertise from the University of the West of England. Progression opportunities are clearly set out in the Undergraduate Prospectus. Students met by the review team provided a range of examples from their programmes where they had been able to develop employability skills, and past students spoke positively of how well they had been prepared for employment, which was endorsed to the team by employers.

2.34   Processes and procedures are in place to ensure physical and human resources meet student and programme requirements. Students commented positively on the responsiveness of the College in addressing issues relating to availability of resources. One example cited was the availability of 'Mac' computers, and designated studio and space to design students. The students were also aware of the College's plan to purchase premises in the town to develop a higher education centre.

2.35   Support staff informed the review team of the integration of their work within the College's higher education ethos and strategic plan. Audits are undertaken for support activities, such as personal development planning and annual review, and reporting is completed by learning support and the library. These activities are reported to and monitored by the Higher Education Management Team and HEBS. Staff are aware of the contribution of the services they provide to the achievement of key performance indicators within the Higher Education Strategic Plan. Continuous professional development opportunities are provided to ensure support staff maintain their professional understanding and skills. They are included in the in-house higher education conference and/or events either as attendees or contributors. Support staff have also built links with staff operating in similar areas within the College's awarding bodies. National Student Survey feedback indicates high levels of satisfaction with academic support, resources and personal development. The professional and proactive approach of the higher education support team, which enables student development and achievement, is **good practice**. This is linked to Expectation B2 in respect of the role of support staff in the recruitment, selection and admission process. This

Expectation is also linked to an area of good practice in relation to the effective processes in place to support higher education teaching practices identified in Expectation B3.

2.36   The College has in place arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated 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

2.37   The College's approach to student engagement can be found in the Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy. This outlines the steps to involve all students by way of feedback from their programmes in order to enhance the student experience. This Strategy was introduced as part of a deliberate approach to involve students in setting and attaining key strategic objectives. The Strategy is reviewed annually as part of the self-assessment process and revised as required. The College provides both formal and informal opportunities for students to engage in deliberation and provide feedback; health checks are also performed against the Quality Code. There is student involvement as part of annual and monthly meetings and also focus groups. Student engagement is highlighted within the College's Higher Education Student Charter, in the Higher Education Strategic Plan and on the College website. The College has employed a Higher Education Student Engagement Officer to ensure that student engagement occurs consistently and effectively across all programmes and locations.

2.38   The procedures described within the Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy and the Higher Education Student Charter would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.39   The review team spoke to a cross-section of current students and staff, and read minutes and papers from meetings to analyse the evidence given.

2.40   Students whom the review team met were happy with the quality of teaching provided by all staff, and appreciated the help and support given to them. They felt that their voice had been heard and points that they raised in meetings were acted upon.

2.41   Evidence shows that student representation is working effectively. There are steps to involve the student representatives in processes that can enhance their educational experience, such as involvement in meetings and discussions with various levels of management, alongside the employment of a Higher Education Student Engagement Officer. This appointment enables a graduate to act as a representative in the development and review of policies, procedures and processes that contribute to educational enhancement. This role includes providing training for student representatives. Student representatives confirmed that they had undergone training for their role, which they found useful, and reported that information for the role was available to view on the VLE. Students are actively participating in various levels of discussion with senior management and academic staff. Feedback from students is welcomed at HEBS, HECQC and forum meetings, and has been incorporated into programme design and improving the VLE system. From this, the review team found that the College provides engagement for all students through student representation at meetings, and involvement from programme design through to validation, and as such they are treated as partners in their educational experience.

2.42   The College takes deliberate steps to engage all students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.43   The College observes the assessment policies, regulations and processes of the awarding partners and College-approved academic regulations on assessment. The College has delegated responsibility for designing assessment and ensuring that learning outcomes are set at the relevant level in line with its own assessment regulations and the awarding bodies' academic frameworks. All assessments are reviewed annually by the link tutor on behalf of the awarding partners and agreed in advance prior to sharing with students. Students have access to these academic frameworks with regard to credit, progression and achievement of awards on the VLE. Assessment decisions are confirmed at subject boards for Bath Spa University; field boards for the University of the West of England; and at programme boards for Bath Spa University-accredited College directly funded provision, then on to the relevant award boards of the awarding bodies.

2.44   The review team found evidence that the College recognises the importance of defining and assessing learning outcomes, and these are outlined in student course handbooks, programme handbooks and in the templates of the relevant awarding body. Module learning outcomes are confirmed as part of the programme validation process. These are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor of the FHEQ and other external threshold benchmark standards and then published in handbooks available on the VLE. The review team heard and read evidence that College staff training takes place to ensure that all staff understand and are fully engaged with the processes and procedures relating to assessment practice. The review team found evidence in meetings with staff of clear understanding of the different awarding body processes for designing and setting assessments and mapping learning outcomes to assessment. The review team found evidence from meetings and assessment policy documentation of students being made aware of information to complete assessments, along with guidance to staff on assessment setting within the policies and procedures of both the awarding bodies and the College. The review team found that accreditation of prior learning is dependent upon the regulations of the awarding bodies, and information relating to this is available to applicants through the College website, which directs them to the Higher Education Admissions Policy and Procedures. The review team read evidence from external examiner reports that confirms assessments are appropriate, set at the correct level, and delivering module and programme learning outcomes. These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.45   The review team evaluated the processes, procedures and practices with regard to the definition and setting of assessment, and the mapping of assessments to module and programme learning outcomes, through scrutiny of external examiner reports, meetings with staff and students, and scrutinising the process of assessment design and practice within the College across its two awarding bodies. The review team found evidence of effective understanding and awareness among staff of the importance and use of learning outcomes in programme and module design, in addition to assessment setting and marking to learning outcomes on assessment feedback forms. The review team found evidence that all assessments are mapped and marked to learning outcomes and these are contained in the Student Course Handbook, for Bath Spa University programmes, and the Programme Handbook, for the University of the West of England programmes.

2.46   The review team discussed the involvement of the awarding bodies in assessment design, guidance and approval and found a close working relationship between the awarding body partner link tutors and the academic staff at the College. There was good evidence available to the review team of formal and informal workshops and conferences to guide and develop assessment practice, and found this to be a process undertaken in partnership with the awarding bodies. The review team heard and found evidence that the link tutors at the awarding bodies are working effectively with the College to review assessments and support staff in setting standards in assessment and explicit mapping to learning outcomes for the modules and programmes. The review team found evidence of the effective use, review and approval of learning outcomes in assessment by link tutors and external examiners. There are effective processes in place, supported by appropriate policies and regulations, to ensure that assessments are set at the appropriate level that allows students to meet the intended learning outcomes for their programmes. The close working relationship with the awarding bodies, which facilitates a reflective and responsive approach to assessment design and practice, is **good practice**. This area of good practice is also linked to Expectation B1 in terms of the close working relationship with the awarding bodies in programme design, development and approval.

2.47   The College, through its awarding bodies, ensures that equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment are in place, including those 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. 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

2.48   External examiners are appointed according to the College's awarding bodies' processes and procedures. The College operates within the requirements of its awarding bodies. The Higher Education Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures document sets out clear guidelines for the receipt and response to external examiners' reports. For Bath Spa University, the College produces a formal response to external examiner reports, and this includes an action plan produced in conjunction with the link tutor. For the University of the West of England programmes, the College produces a formal faculty response which is a compulsory section of the Field Examiner Report.

2.49   External examiner reports are used both at programme and faculty level and contribute to the annual monitoring and review process. A College-wide overview report of external examining is received by HEBS in December of each year. Feedback from external examiner reports is also used to inform higher education continuous professional development. External examiner reports are made available to students through the VLE and also form part of the agenda for the staff student liaison committees.

2.50   The processes and procedures in place at the College for using feedback from external examiners in ensuring academic standards and quality of learning opportunities would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.51   In testing the Expectation, the review team considered processes for managing external examiners and the reports and the action plans produced in response to these. The team also held meetings with staff members and students.

2.52   The Higher Education Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures document sets out clear processes for dealing with external examiner reports from each awarding body. Reports are tracked against a timeline. In addition to the formal response made to the relevant awarding body, the College uses external examiner reports to inform the annual monitoring process both at programme and faculty level. Staff met during the review visit and the monitoring reports considered by the review team confirmed this.

2.53   There is also an established process of presenting an annual College-wide overview report on the outcomes of external examiner reports. This report considers the achievement of actions from the previous external examiner reports and strengths and areas of development for the current reporting period. This report is presented to HEBS, the senior management team and HECQC. External examiner reports confirm that academic standards are met and the quality of the programmes offered. Staff described the process to the review team, and minutes of HEBS confirm the deliberations regarding the annual external examiner report. Currently five members of College staff undertake external examiner roles for other providers and there is active encouragement for staff to engage in this activity.

2.54   Access to external examiner reports is provided to students through the VLE and students confirmed to the review team that they had access to them. Students were also aware of the role of external examiners and the opportunities for discussion of the reports at the student staff liaison committees.

2.55   The processes and procedures in place allow the College to fulfil awarding body requirements relating to external examiners. The review and monitoring systems in place ensure external examiner reports are considered at programme, faculty and College-wide

level and students are aware of the purpose of external examiner reports. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*

Findings

2.56   The College works within each awarding body's regulations, policies and practices with regard to annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes. Programme monitoring and review has been subject to an ongoing health check by the College against the Expectations of the Quality Code. The process, practices and periodic cycle for annual monitoring and periodic review are outlined and published in the awarding bodies' regulations and the College's Higher Education Quality Assurance Policy and Procedures. The College manages its delegated responsibilities for annual monitoring and periodic review by reporting at programme, faculty and, in the case of one awarding body, at institutional level. The College uses the relevant quality assurance monitoring templates and timescales of the awarding bodies and internally considers AMRs at HEBS before the reports are considered by the awarding bodies own internal quality assurance processes. Annual programme monitoring, described as subject annual monitoring reporting (SAMR) for Bath Spa University programmes and AME2b for University of the West of England programmes is informed by a range of information and intelligence. The annual programme monitoring reports are shared with awarding partners, who check and approve the return and monitor the actions. With Bath Spa University, a Partner Annual Report is produced, covering all SAMRs for all programmes, which is submitted to Bath Spa University Collaborative Provision Committee, and internally at HEBS. For the University of the West of England there is an annual AME5 Partnership Lead Report, which considers themes that arise through annual monitoring, which is submitted and monitored at the University's Partnership Board Meetings and HEBS within defined quality assurance reporting cycles. The College uses a range of key performance indicators and data to inform the annual monitoring and periodic review processes which align with the awarding body processes and regulations.

2.57   The review team found evidence of a systematic and data-driven approach to action planning in the annual monitoring processes with monitoring and reporting being considered by strategic committees of the awarding bodies and the College. The review team found evidence that the annual monitoring processes of the College require feedback from employers and students. There was evidence presented to the review team of the AMRs reflecting upon key programme performance data, external examiner comments, and data on the National Student Survey and employability. The review team found evidence of AMRs and action plans being scrutinised at faculty management and institutional levels, through HEBS, and the Higher Education Quality Manager with the Head of Faculty required to produce a faculty-level annual monitoring report (FAMR) analysing a number of programme monitoring reports. The review team heard and found evidence that College staff work closely in partnership with the awarding bodies to produce annual monitoring documentation in line with the relevant academic frameworks of the awarding bodies. On the basis of these arrangements the College would meet the Expectation.

2.58   The review team evaluated the processes and practices with regard to annual monitoring, periodic review, and quality assurance action-planning and found that the College was effective in engaging with the awarding bodies' regulations on validation and review. The review team found evidence of effective action planning and monitoring by Higher Education Partnership Managers, faculties and HEBS. The review team considered that the annual monitoring and review processes of the College, in partnership with the

awarding bodies, was systematic, comprehensive and relied on key information and data. The awarding bodies provide evaluative feedback on their confidence placed with the College and their respective partnerships. The team evaluated the use made by the College of AMRs and action plans and found clear evidence of the effective involvement of staff at programme, faculty and College levels, working in partnership with the staff at the awarding bodies to monitor programme quality and periodically review programmes. The processes and procedures, and supporting College quality assurance procedures and policies, are understood by staff and used effectively in the monitoring of programmes by the College and the awarding bodies. The review team found that periodic review ensures academic standards are being achieved and maintained and that the College and awarding bodies have established processes and practices for effective and evaluative annual monitoring and periodic review.

2.59   The review team concludes that the College, through its awarding bodies, ensures that 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. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.60   The Higher Education Complaints Policy and Procedures sets out how students can appeal and make complaints to the College. This policy has been developed to reflect best practice guidance identified by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). This policy provides a clear route for students to raise concerns regarding their experiences at the College and if necessary initiate investigations into alleged academic and pastoral malpractice. The policy is available on the College's website, on the VLE, within student handbooks and is covered in the induction of all new students.

2.61   The review team examined the procedures available to students on the VLE, in student handbooks and through links to awarding body regulations, as well as on the College website and documents which included specific issues raised.

2.62   All students have access to the Higher Education Complaints Policy and Procedures on the College's website and VLE, and they may discuss issues with their tutors, the Higher Education Student Officer, HEART or their curriculum/programme coordinator. Information about how to make a complaint is also available in student handbooks and within the Student Charter. Students are made aware of the policy during induction.

2.63   The College has developed a staged approach to making a complaint which can be escalated if the complainant does not feel the matter is resolved after the previous stage. This commences with an informal process by which students can direct complaints as and when they arise; however, if the issue has not been resolved the formal process can be accessed. There have been two formal complaints in the last academic year which were resolved. The team saw evidence that students are kept informed of the progress of the complaint investigation and are clearly notified of the outcomes. For Bath Spa University indirectly funded programmes and for University of the West of England directly and indirectly funded programmes, the academic appeals approach follows the procedure as identified in the awarding body regulations. Complaints reports are also addressed in meetings. The complaints report provides assurance at organisational level that student concerns are highlighted and discussed.

2.64   In the case of complaints about programmes delivered by the College on behalf of its university awarding partners, these are investigated first through the College's Higher Education Complaints Policy and Procedures. The student has a right to appeal decisions made by the College with the partner university. There is a procedure in place which allows for the complaint to be escalated and reviewed by the awarding body but only if the complainant can demonstrate significant grounds for dissatisfaction with the response; either specifically on the basis that there is new evidence for consideration or that there has been a procedural irregularity in the investigation of the complaint. If a complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the decision the matter can be referred to the OIA, provided that the complaint is eligible under its rules and a Completion of Procedures letter has been issued.

2.65   Overall, the team found that the system and procedures for academic appeals and student complaints operated by the College are fair, effective and timely and would allow the Expectation to be 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

2.66   The College has a strong employer focus and strategic commitment that encourages and supports work experience and placements for higher education students. The Higher Education Work-based Learning and Placements Policy and Procedures, introduced in 2014, provides guidance for the delivery of work-based learning and this is further developed on-programme and in student handbooks. Students are responsible for securing work placements and the Student Work Placement Guidance Pack is designed to assist them in this activity. The Health and Safety Work Placement Information document and forms ensure the suitability of the work placement and college staff maintain contact with the placement provider and students.

2.67   A review of work-based learning was undertaken in 2014 and reported to HEBS. In 2015, an all programme review of work placement was commissioned, using an external consultant, and this resulted in a Quality Focus Group being convened in January 2016 in order to address the review's findings.

2.68   The College works with the North Bristol Trust in delivering the FdSc Health and Social Practice and staff at the Trust are involved in the assessment of the compulsory clinical-based module and a Memorandum of Understanding is in place relating to this arrangement. The systems in place for the management of work placement and its arrangements with the North Bristol Trust would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.69   Work-based learning opportunities reflect the vocational nature of the higher education programmes being offered. The Higher Education Work-based Learning and Placements Policy and Procedures provide an overarching framework for the delivery of work-based learning while acknowledging the needs of individual programmes. The onus is on students finding placements although, if needed, support is available to help students in this process. The Student Workplace Guidance Pack provides structured information and advice on finding and securing a work placement. There is also a strong emphasis on ensuring the placements are safe and secure environments for students. Staff and students confirmed to the review team the effectiveness of the arrangements in place and the value of work experience in developing students' understanding and employability. Employers also confirmed to the review team that work placements were well managed and they were aware of their responsibilities. Employers, staff and students explained the process to be followed if a problem should occur with a work experience placement, together with citing examples of where this had occurred and had been resolved.

2.70   In 2015, an external consultant undertook on behalf of the College a wide-ranging all programme review to assess the impact of the Work-based Learning and Placements Policy and Procedures. The findings of the report were considered, in turn, by a specifically convened quality focus group which made recommendations to the Higher Education Directorate Management Team. The quality focus group met three times and made a series of recommendations to help improve management-based learning. In particular, two documents have resulted from this activity. The first is the Higher Education Work-based Learning and Placements Student Guide which is written clearly, is informative and structured around the stages in the workplace journey together with focusing on the

academic, health, safety and safeguarding requirements of work placement, together with identifying any ethical considerations. The second is the Higher Education Placement Provider Guide which is an accessible source of information for those involved in the supervision of students during work placement. Staff and students met by the review team were aware of these developments.

2.71   The relationship with the North Bristol Trust is closely managed by the College. Trust staff act as mentors in supporting students at levels four and five in their compulsory clinical-based module as part of the FdSc Health and Social Care Practice. Mentors are provided with continuous professional development to ensure that they are kept up-to-date with College and awarding body requirements. Staff from the Trust and the College confirmed to the review team the operation of the arrangements in place to ensure the security of assessment judgement made for the practice portfolio.

2.72   Overall, the review team finds that the College has in place processes and procedures to manage work placements and the relationship with the North Bristol Trust. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.73   The College has no research degree provision, therefore this Expectation is not applicable.

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.75   All Expectations in this area are met and the level of risk is considered low in all Expectations. The review team identified four areas of good practice in Expectations B1, B3, B4 and B6 respectively. There are no affirmations or recommendations in this area.

2.76   The College has a robust and well-documented set of processes and procedures for the proposal, design and approval of higher education programmes. There is a clear understanding among staff of the different awarding body processes for programme approval, and the importance and use of external benchmarks and standards, which is facilitated by effective training for staff to undertake programme design and engage in approval activity. There is significant involvement of external scrutiny in programme design and approval and this is apparent in both the design and approval processes, with effective use of students and employers to inform curriculum development. The review team notes as good practice the use of student and employer involvement in design, development and validation, which is particularly effective in ensuring that programmes are focused on their needs.

2.77   The Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is central to the delivery of teaching and learning at the College, and sets out clearly statements of intent that demonstrate the College's commitment to teaching and learning and the standards expected of staff. Peer observation is well established and staff are provided with training to support their involvement in the process. Scholarly activity is effectively managed and promoted, and funding is made available centrally to support staff in their identified and agreed development. The impact of scholarly activity on the student experience is formally analysed on an annual basis and informs higher education professional development events. Professional development activities include higher education conferences that draw on external speakers with expertise in higher education pedagogy. There are also specific higher education continuous professional development days that provide opportunities to share good practice, feedback from external examiners, peer observation of teaching, and output from scholarly activity. Staff value their professional development, the cross-fertilisation of ideas arising from peer review, and the impact of scholarly activity on their teaching practice, while students were very positive about their teaching and learning experiences. The review team recognises as good practice the effective processes in place to support higher education teaching practices, which ensure the distinctiveness of the quality of learning opportunities.

2.78   The College provides a full range of support to students covering pre-enrolment, transition onto their programme, their study on-programme, and progression from their study. Central to the development of academic skills is the HE.LP Study Skills programme, which is delivered and managed by library staff and supported by online learning materials on the VLE. Students value the availability of study support and help provided by the College in developing their academic skills. The College has also developed the services available to students further by the provision of autism and mental health support, and students confirmed the value and accessibility of this support. The work of support staff is integrated within the College's higher education ethos and strategic plan, with audits undertaken for support activities such as personal development planning and annual review, and reporting completed by learning support and the library. Staff are aware of the contribution of the services they provide to the achievement of key performance indicators within the Higher Education Strategic Plan. Continuous professional development opportunities are provided

to ensure support staff maintain their professional understanding and skills. The review team considers as good practice the professional and proactive approach of the higher education support team, which enables student development and achievement.

2.79   There is a close working relationship between the awarding body partner link tutors and the academic staff at the College in relation to assessment design, guidance and approval. Formal and informal workshops and conferences are undertaken in partnership with the awarding bodies, and these guide and develop assessment practice. Link tutors at the awarding bodies work effectively with the College to review assessments and support staff in setting standards in assessment, and explicit mapping to learning outcomes for the modules and programmes. There is effective use, review and approval of learning outcomes in assessment by academic staff, link tutors and external examiners. The review team notes as good practice the close working relationship with the awarding bodies, which facilitates a reflective and responsive approach to assessment design and practice.

2.80   The College has plans to enhance this area further; managing the needs of students is a clear focus of strategies and policies. In addition, student engagement in the management of this area is widespread and supported.

2.81   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

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 main channels for dissemination of information about higher education provision are the College website, the College VLE, and student and programme handbooks. To ensure accuracy, a detailed Guaranteed Level of Information Policy and Procedures was produced. The College also undertook a full audit of public information to assess levels of compliance with CMA requirements so that the information including the stages of checking and final sign-off are correct. These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.2 The review team tested whether information was clear, fit for purpose and accessible by scrutinising the College website, VLE and relevant documents such as the undergraduate prospectus and programme handbooks. The team also met senior and academic staff, professional support staff and students.

3.3 The College has a dedicated higher education section on its website with accessible and up-to-date information about all its programmes which can be accessed primarily through the online Undergraduate Prospectus. The website includes key information for prospective students on how to apply, entry requirements, course duration, campus location, what the students will study on the course, the differences between qualifications, fees, funding and possible progression routes. The accuracy and auditing of information provided in the Undergraduate Prospectus was the responsibility of the Higher Education Student Recruitment Officer.

3.4 The review team examined the College Undergraduate Prospectus and found it fit for purpose and found evidence that all information contained within it was checked on an annual basis. The prospectus was available to download from the website and was also available in hard copy. The prospectus mirrors the information available on the website. The review team noted that the format and information contained within the student handbook was consistent across the higher education courses provided. External examiner reports are made available to students on the pages of the VLE in dedicated resource areas for their programme. It was reported to the team that prospective students had the opportunity to view external examiner reports before enrolment, thus allowing an insight into College performance on respective courses. The review team found that students are familiar with the VLE and that the paper-based and electronic approach to the Undergraduate Prospectus allows for inclusivity. All students receive a College induction at the commencement of their programme, which includes general College information and an induction questionnaire is used to gain feedback to improve the admissions and induction process.

3.5 Overall, the review team found the College provides consistent and relevant information for prospective and current students about the learning opportunities they offer which is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The 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

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

3.7   The Expectation in this area is met and the risk to student learning opportunities is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or good practice in this area.

3.8   The College produces information through a range of mechanisms and media that is accessible, fit for purpose and trustworthy. Accuracy of information is facilitated by a clear and detailed policy, which is understood by staff. Information on the website is comprehensive, thus aiding prospective students in their decisions regarding higher education, and the availability of the undergraduate prospectus in electronic and paper-based formats allows for inclusivity. The VLE is well used by students and enables them to access important information about their programmes of study.

3.9   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's approach to enhancement is encapsulated in its Higher Education Strategic Plan and the College's Higher Education Enhancement Strategy. These documents identify the approach and strategic aims of enhancing the student experience and incorporate activities and initiatives from both a top-down and bottom-up perspective. The College demonstrated in its application of these strategies an embedded awareness of enhancement and this was reflected in other documentation, such as assessment feedback forms, staff appraisal and performance criteria, and approaches and forums to satisfying the student experience. This embedding of an ethos of enhancement was demonstrable at all levels and areas of the College from the Principal through to the academic and support staff of the College.

4.2   The review team heard and read evidence that the College actively considers and reflects on enhancement of the student experience as part of annual monitoring and educational development through impact studies. There was evidence from meetings with staff and students and scrutinising documentation, such as handbooks, assessment feedback processes and student support opportunities, that the College encourages an ethos of enhancement and continuous improvement across all areas of its higher education provision. On the basis of these arrangements the College would meet the Expectation.

4.3   The review team evaluated and tested the effectiveness of the approach to enhancement and found documented evidence of the use of impact studies to judge enhancements in the student experience and the consideration of enhancement in various committees and forums in the College, including the use of quality assurance management practices designed to secure and recognise enhancements in the student experience. There was evidence of enhancement being effectively monitored and reported upon in various committees, the primary of these being HEBS, where the impact of enhancement action plans was evident with clear awareness by staff of the need for continuous improvement of the student experience. The College demonstrated to the review team through meetings with staff and students a clear understanding of each individual staff member's responsibility for enhancing their professional practice and the College's deliberative committee structures monitoring the effectiveness of enhancement activity and practice.

4.4   The review team considered that the approaches to enhancement were understood and recognised across the College with a range of examples provided including the use of data captured from students and staff, external examiners and employers through formal quality assurance procedures with supporting enhancement funding of both buildings and equipment available to students. The review team considered the embedding of consideration of enhancement in quality assurance and a number of other process areas to be effective and widespread. The review team found the College's approach to enhancement to be embedded at all levels of management, with staff effectively engaging in enhancement activities that led to continuous improvements in the student experience, such as changes to student support through HEART, changes to documentation, practices and processes of providing student feedback and improving learning opportunities in and outside of the classroom, along with evidence of effective College responses to enhancement of the higher education physical and learning environment.

4.5   The review team concludes that the College takes deliberate steps to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation for enhancement is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

4.7   The Expectation in this area is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or areas of good practice in this area.

4.8   The College has a clearly articulated enhancement strategy, which ensures that initiatives and activities are evaluated at a strategic level to inform the enhancement of higher education. These facilitate an approach to enhancement that is embedded at all levels of management, and staff effectively engage in enhancement activities that lead to continuous improvements in the student experience. There is consideration and reflection on enhancement of the student experience as part of annual monitoring and through impact studies, and supporting enhancement funding of both buildings and equipment is available.

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

5   Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1   Employability is central to the ethos of the College and the Higher Education Strategic Plan 2014-17 focuses on the responsiveness of the higher education curriculum in meeting the needs of employers and the local and regional economy, and developing skills to allow students to enter the world of work or self-employment. The College works with two awarding bodies to identify and develop programmes that meet, in particular the priorities of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership and North Somerset Council. As a consequence, the College offers a range of vocational and industry-focused foundation degrees and final year honours top-up degrees. The development of these programmes is based on an internal programme development procedure which addresses market demand, competitor analysis and employer need. Curriculum content is determined through stakeholder forums that include representation by employers and students thus determining and ensuring vocational relevance of the curriculum content.

5.2   Opportunities are identified and taken within the programmes offered to deliver employability skills and apply theoretical knowledge to professional contexts. This is achieved through the use of activities such as live briefs and examples include students working to a design brief set by an external client; public and environmental health students carrying out projects for Wessex Water and Bristol City Council; and business students undertaking a retail project for a local hospice charity. Employers and business owners across subject disciplines provide students with an insight into industry/sector expectations and skills requirements. Students are also involved in visiting businesses and/or attending exhibitions; these provide an opportunity to network with employers. Staff at the College maintain close links with their vocational areas and/or are involved in developing their own professional practice. The College also draws on links with past students that are either working for local employers or running their own businesses.

5.3   Work placement provides a valuable opportunity for students to gain employment skills and experience of the work environment. Placements are tailored to reflect the needs of vocational areas. Where work placement is not a viable option then students are involved in work-based learning activities. Examples of this include, foundation degree music students attending a series of residential weeks at recording studios, and uniformed and public services students taking part in field trips that have a work-based learning component such as team-building.

5.4   Students met by the review team spoke positively about the role of work placement in their programmes and the support available, together with the opportunities for students to gain work-related experience such as running their own theatre company. Students also commented to the team on the College's employability focus and the opportunities in their programme to develop employability skills, make industry contacts together, and developing an understanding of business skills and planning. Employers described to the review team their involvement in programme design and development and how this provides an opportunity for them to influence curriculum content in meeting current industry and future employment needs. Employers also provided examples of contributing to live briefs and taking part in mock recruitment interviews. Employers commented on the professionalism of students and the open dialogue between employers and the College, together with the willingness of the College to respond to employer feedback. Past students spoke of how they felt their programme and the College had prepared them for employment both in an employed or self-employed capacity.

5.5   The College's Higher Education Guaranteed Tutorial Entitlement supports students in personal development planning and considering future career options and choices.

Opportunities are provided for students to reflect on their career aspirations and developing strategies to achieve these. In addition to embedding employability within the curriculum, careers advice and guidance is available to higher education students and this has been developed further by providing additional careers service support to higher education students through services provided by the University of the West of England. The Employability Week also provides a focused opportunity to help students with career choice and job application and interview skills.

5.6   The College also uses its programme monitoring and review processes to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of employability within its higher education programmes. The higher education data report includes information relating to leavers' destinations and this is considered by HEBS. In 2014-15, 93 per cent of higher education students progressed into employment or further study.

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Distance learning
A programme 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 programme of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

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

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

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

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

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)
An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as Programme 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.