

Higher Education Review of Wiltshire College

December 2015

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Wiltshire College. The review took place from 1 to 4 December 2015 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Wendy Gill
- Patricia Millner
- Karen Willis
- Scott Thomas (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Wiltshire 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 6. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 10.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amended judgement - March 2017

Introduction

In December 2015, Wiltshire College underwent a Higher Education Review, which resulted in academic standards, information about learning opportunities, and enhancement of student learning opportunities meeting UK expectations, but quality of learning opportunities requiring improvement to meet UK expectations.

Negative judgements are subject to a formal follow-up by QAA, which involves the monitoring of an action plan produced by the College in response to the report findings.

The College published an action plan in June 2016 describing how it intended to address the recommendations and affirmations identified in the review, and has been working over the last eight months to demonstrate how it has implemented that plan.

The follow-up process included three progress updates and culminated in the review team's scrutiny of the College's progress reports and the supporting documentary evidence, along with a one-day visit on 8 February 2017 with two reviewers. During the visit, the review team met senior, academic and support staff, employers, and students to discuss progress and triangulate the evidence base received over the preceding months.

The visit confirmed that the recommendations and affirmations relating to the quality of learning opportunities had been successfully addressed. Actions against recommendations and affirmations relating to academic standards and information about learning opportunities, which received positive judgements, had also been completed on schedule and contributed to the progress against the quality of learning opportunities.

QAA Board decision and amended judgement

The review team concludes that the College had made sufficient progress to recommend that the judgement be amended. The QAA Board accepted the team's recommendation and the judgement is now formally amended. The College's judgements are now as follows.

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

Findings from the follow-up process

The team found that the College had made progress against the recommendations and affirmations as follows.

Recommendation - Ensure that all Higher National programme specifications include tailored programme-level learning outcomes to meet the requirements of the awarding organisation and reflect the integration of unit content into a coherent programme (Expectations A2.2, A3.2 and B1).

The College now links local Higher National (HN) programme aims and outcomes to unit learning outcomes through the use of a revised programme handbook template. Staff development days, and individual and group sessions have been held to support academic staff in developing programme-level aims and outcomes and to map them to unit learning

outcomes using the HN programme-level learning outcomes mapping template. Senior staff have been using a checklist to monitor progress on mapping. All but one of the programme handbooks now contain full statements of local programme aims and the mapping of defined programme outcomes to individual units. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Implement College-level oversight of clear and robust arrangements for placement and work-based learning activities that include definitions of the various types of workplace learning, and are proportionate to the nature and requirements of the respective programme and their unit/module learning outcomes (Expectation B10).

The College conducted a comprehensive audit of work placement and work-based learning practice and documentation, and of practice elsewhere, and this has informed the development of a new set of procedures for maintaining oversight of work-related activities, including an online tracking sheet. The College revised its policy statement on 'Work-based learning and placement learning and its assessment' to include clear and distinct definitions of different types of work-related activity at both College and course level. A significant aspect of the improvement in oversight of work-related activities has been the development of the Higher Education Work Experience (WEX) File. The File is overseen by the Higher Education Work Experience Team Leader, which has enabled effective liaison with tutors to advise and ensure currency and completeness of information. These significant developments have been overseen by the Higher Education Performance and Quality Group and the Higher Education Board of Studies (HEBoS). The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Ensure that training for all higher education student representatives is carried out in a timely and consistent manner to prepare and equip them for their respective roles (Expectation B5).

The College has new guidance in place for student representatives and greater clarity regarding the terminology used to describe different types of representatives. Information about Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) is included in the Wiltshire College Welcome Pack and on the VLE, and there is a clearer and closer link between SSLCs and HEBoS. There is a revised training package in place for student representatives which is jointly delivered by the Higher Education Manager to ensure greater consistency across campuses. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Ensure that external examiners' reports are consistently made available to all higher education students (Expectation B7).

The College now has a designated space on the VLE for external examiners' reports to be made available although not all programmes had uploaded reports. There is a new template agenda for each SSLC meeting with the first meeting of the academic year routinely including a discussion of external examiners' reports as part of the agenda. The Higher Education Manager produces a thematic analysis which is reported to the HEBoS. This results in an action plan and report which is considered by the Governors. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Ensure the principles of the College's statement of Work-based and Placement Learning and its Assessment are fully implemented at programme and unit/module level (Expectation B10).

The College has updated its statement of 'Work-based and Placement Learning and its Assessment' and aligned its processes and documentation with the principles of the Statement. It is now part of the cross-College Work Experience (WEX) File and is disseminated to relevant members of staff. A process for the Statement, and associated processes to be cross-checked and reviewed as part of the quality cycle, are now in place. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Strengthen and formalise the involvement of higher education student representatives as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (Expectation B5).

The College now has guidance on student representation and respective roles which includes the Students' Union Higher Education Officer and other Students' Union executive positions, the new role of the Higher Education Student Governor, student representatives on the HEBoS, and a pack on SSLCs. In addition, the Governors' constitution now enables the appointment of a Higher Education Student Governor, and students are now members of the HEBoS. Staff have been introduced to the developments and new information through staff development days. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation - Strengthen and make more rigorous the College's oversight of quality assurance and enhancement for higher education provision (Expectations B3 and B8). The College now has a new quality infrastructure and cycle for the current academic year. There is a new HEBoS, with student involvement increasing on this and other relevant committees. The new structure provides clearer links between higher education committees and greater strategic oversight of provision. The latter is enhanced further by the revised management structure. The College has also reviewed its annual teaching and learning peer observation cycle to reflect on learning opportunities and teaching practices. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in addressing the recommendation.

Affirmation - The steps taken to improve the consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes through the implementation of Assessment Boards, a programme handbook template, and formal processes for internal programme approval and periodic review (Expectations A2.2, B1, B6, B8 and C).

The College has continued with these steps while also proposing a number of further developments to the management of HN programmes. These include: the presentation of all programmes bi-annually at the HN Assessment Board, with marks presented live through a system called 'Markbook'; the use by all HN programmes of the generic programme handbook template; the implementation of the course approval process for all programmes, using the College documentation; and the establishment of a rolling cycle for the routine periodic review of all HN programmes every four or five years, starting with HNC/D Engineering. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in continuing to address this affirmation.

Affirmation - The steps taken towards the final publication of a comprehensive staff admissions handbook (Expectation B2).

The College now has a staff admissions handbook for each higher education programme, based on generic information but customised to enable programme-specific information to be added as required. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in continuing to address this affirmation.

Affirmation - The actions taken to strengthen the tutorial process including the introduction of the Graduate Attributes Tutorial Booklet (Expectation B4).

The College now has staff development activities for higher education lecturers, information for students provided in the welcome packs, discussion of tutorials and graduate attributes at SSLC meetings, and the inclusion of the graduate attributes in the generic Higher Education Student Handbook. Graduate attributes are also an integral part of work placements. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in continuing to address this affirmation.

Affirmation - The actions taken to introduce Student Staff Liaison Committees for Higher National programmes to bring them in line with other higher education provision (Expectation B5).

The College now has SSLCs for all HN provision. There is an SSLC guidance pack for students and meeting agenda templates for SSLCs. The College has also run sessions about SSLCs during staff development days. The review team concludes that the College is making the required progress in continuing to address this affirmation.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Wiltshire College

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

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisations **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **requires improvement to meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team did not identify any features of **good practice** at Wiltshire College.

Recommendations

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

By April 2016:

- ensure the currency of information on websites, in particular student programme and finance information (Expectation C).

By July 2016:

- ensure that all Higher National programme specifications include tailored programme-level learning outcomes to meet the requirements of the awarding organisation and reflect the integration of unit content into a coherent programme (Expectations A2.2, A3.2 and B1)
- implement College-level oversight of clear and robust arrangements for placement and work-based learning activities that include definitions of the various types of workplace learning, and are proportionate to the nature and requirements of the respective programme and their unit/module learning outcomes (Expectation B10).

By September 2016:

- ensure that training for all higher education student representatives is carried out in a timely and consistent manner to prepare and equip them for their respective roles (Expectation B5)
- ensure that external examiners' reports are consistently made available to all higher education students (Expectation B7)
- ensure the principles of the College's statement of Work-based and Placement Learning and its Assessment are fully implemented at programme and unit/module level (Expectation B10)
- ensure that the VLE content is reviewed and updated in a timely and systematic manner (Expectation C)
- strengthen and formalise the involvement of higher education student representatives as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (Expectation B5).

By December 2016:

- strengthen and make more rigorous the College's oversight of quality assurance and enhancement for higher education provision (Expectations B3 and B8)
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the College's Enhancement Strategy (Enhancement).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The steps taken to improve consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes through the implementation of Assessment Boards, a programme handbook template, and formal processes for internal programme approval and periodic review (Expectations A2.2, B1, B6, B8 and C).
- The steps taken towards the final publication of a comprehensive staff admissions handbook (Expectation B2).
- The actions taken to strengthen the tutorial process including the introduction of the Graduate Attributes Tutorial Booklet (Expectation B4).
- The actions taken to introduce Staff-Student Liaison Committees for Higher National programmes to bring them in line with other higher education provision (Expectation B5).

Theme: Student Employability

Employability is central to the strategic aims of the College and is embedded in its ethos. All programmes have been designed to develop employability skills, and include some form of work-related learning to support students in developing employability and industry-related skills. The new Graduate Attributes Tutorial Booklet, developed to support the tutorial process, augments a range of skills development. Students are confident that their employability skills are being developed within their programmes, and staff confirmed that employability skills are developed within and outside the programme of study and provided examples of students developing communication skills by undertaking roles such as being appointed as the Higher Education Governor, student peer support, student ambassadors and student note-takers. Employers are involved in programme development, approval and review where possible and seek to make contributions to programmes as guest lecturers. Good practice in relation to work-based learning is shared through the Higher Education Conference and student representatives have the opportunity to deliver key messages to enhance employability skills through the Cross-College Union Parliament meetings.

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

About Wiltshire College

Wiltshire College (the College) was formed in 2000 from the merger of Trowbridge, Chippenham and Lackham Colleges. Following the merger with Salisbury College in 2008, it is now the main provider of further and higher education in Wiltshire. As well as these four main campuses, the College also has a dedicated Motorsport Engineering Centre at Castle Combe race track. Higher education is delivered at all campuses. Its mission is 'to provide high quality, flexible, exciting learning and training opportunities that enable our students to succeed'.

At the time of its Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER) by QAA in 2011, the College had 800 higher education students. It now has 616 students on higher education programmes.

The College offers a range of foundation degrees, full honours degrees and 'top-up' courses, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNCs and HNDs), and a Certificate in Education/PGCE. The programmes cover a range of curriculum areas including business, engineering, computing, land-based industries, sport, music, health and care, teaching, and creative industries. The College delivers programmes as part of its relationships with five awarding bodies: University of Bath; Bath Spa University; Bournemouth University; University of Greenwich; The Royal Agricultural University; and Pearson, the awarding organisation. The College has a licensed agreement with the University of Bath, franchised provision with Bournemouth University, and validated provision with the rest of its awarding partners.

The College has identified a number of key challenges facing its higher education provision, including: the embedding of changes to senior management; adapting to changes in funding; growth in validated provision; differentiating higher education teaching and further improving staff development to achieve this; and the strategic growth of higher education to meet local demand.

The College has made satisfactory progress with the recommendations and further development of features of good practice made in the IQER report.

Explanation of the findings about Wiltshire College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 Ultimate responsibility for setting academic standards and ensuring that the requirements of the relevant reference points are met lies with the College's six awarding partners through their programme design, approval and review procedures. The College is responsible for maintaining standards through the delivery and annual monitoring and review of provision, and adheres to each of the awarding partner regulations, processes and procedures as set out in the respective partnership agreements. Programme specifications are provided by the respective degree-awarding universities and make reference to the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, qualification characteristics and credits. For Higher National provision, the College has developed programme specifications which are incorporated within programme handbooks. The College has its own Higher Education Quality Manual which includes a course approval form that refers to levels of study, links with national frameworks and QAA standards. The College also runs higher education staff development days where the Quality Code and relevant reference points are discussed. The approval and review processes that it engages in with its awarding partners would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.2 The review team considered the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining partnership agreements, quality handbooks, the Higher Nationals Staff Handbook, programme revalidation and review documentation, programme specifications,

and the relevant regulations, policies and procedures of the College and its awarding partners. The team also held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and representatives from the awarding bodies.

1.3 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. The review team saw evidence that programme specifications provided by the respective degree-awarding universities make appropriate reference to the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, qualification characteristic and credits. Programme specifications are available on the College's website, VLE and within programme handbooks for Higher National provision. The specifications for Higher National provision include reference to the appropriate FHEQ level, but programme-level learning outcomes have not been consistently tailored to meet local programme needs (see paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18). External examiner reports confirm that the level and outcomes are appropriate.

1.4 The review team saw evidence that the College, in adhering to relevant reference points, manages its higher education provision in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners. Examples of their involvement in programme development were noted in partnership and programme reviews conducted by The Royal Agricultural University, Bournemouth University, and the University of Bath. While minutes from meetings of the Higher Education Strategy Group and the Performance and Quality Group provide evidence that monitoring and periodic review reports are referred to in these meetings, the minutes lack detail of any strategic discussions being held.

1.5 Although staff development day agendas make no explicit reference to the FHEQ, teaching staff whom the team met were confident in discussing how they use it, for example during feedback on levels in lesson design and in higher education lesson observation reports.

1.6 While the awarding partners have ultimate responsibility through their own regulatory frameworks for ensuring that the relevant external reference points are adhered to, there is evidence that the College effectively manages its own responsibilities for doing this within its partnership agreements. Staff have a good understanding of the FHEQ and the relevant external reference points for higher education. The team therefore 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

1.7 The regulatory frameworks of the awarding partners determine academic standards and the award of credit for each programme. The College has close and longstanding partnerships with its awarding partners and works in accordance with their academic regulations and procedures. The College has a Higher Education Quality Manual which includes reference to assessment frameworks. The College designs, delivers and assesses its programmes in accordance with the appropriate frameworks and processes set out in awarding partner regulations, guidance, programme handbooks and partnership agreements. For the Higher National provision, the College has recently developed a new Staff Handbook and introduced Assessment Boards. A new higher education management and quality structure has been recently established, with a Higher Education Strategic Group providing oversight of the provision. Programme Coordinators/Leaders manage courses within curriculum areas with oversight provided by the Vice Principal Higher Education and Development and the Higher Education Manager. The College's processes would enable it to meet the Expectation.

1.8 The review team considered the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining academic frameworks and regulations, partnership agreements, programme and staff handbooks, and minutes of relevant groups and committees. It also held meetings with teaching and senior staff.

1.9 The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective in practice. The respective responsibilities of the awarding partners and the College are clearly set out and the review team saw evidence that the College effectively and consistently adheres to the frameworks and regulations in the award of credit and qualifications. Periodic reviews carried out by awarding bodies confirm that the College is operating in accordance with their academic frameworks and regulations and procedures. The College has recently developed new periodic review procedures for its Higher National provision and the first review is scheduled for spring 2016.

1.10 Staff whom the team met confirmed the close and effective working relationships between course teams and awarding bodies to ensure adherence to the relevant academic regulations. The new higher education quality and management structure is now in place, including the role of the Higher Education Manager, and the deliberative structure includes some committees which focus only on higher education, while others include it as a component. The College does not have its own unifying strategies and policies which work across all of its awarding bodies. Instead, staff work with awarding partner documentation, with support and guidance from the Vice Principal Higher Education and Development and the Higher Education Manager. The College has a Quality Cycle and a recently developed Higher Education Quality Manual, which also makes reference to further education. The College provides staff development and training for higher education and all staff are involved in lesson observations which include specific reference to the FHEQ.

1.11 The awarding partners have responsibility for academic frameworks and regulations. The College adheres to these, and has also started to develop its own policies and procedures, including those for its Higher National provision. Within the context of the

partnership agreements with its awarding partners, the 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

1.12 The College publishes definitive records, in the form of programme specifications, for all approved programmes and qualifications. For programmes offered on behalf of its University partners, programme specifications are written to the respective institutional templates required under the academic regulations set out in partnership agreements. Programme teams are responsible for updating programme specifications annually, in consultation with the respective awarding bodies, to ensure the information is current and accurate. All students are given hard copy and access to an electronic copy on the VLE, and also access to individual module handbooks.

1.13 For its Higher National programmes, the College's new BTEC Higher Nationals Staff Handbook 2015-16 includes a section linking to a new programme specification and standard handbook template, in presentation software, devised by the College for completion by each programme team. Programme specifications or handbooks are published on the College's website and are also available on the VLE. There is now a Definitive Record Updating and Approval process for Higher National programme handbooks, and the Quality Manager also samples programme handbooks as part of a quality audit throughout the year. These approaches would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

1.14 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining programme specifications, the VLE and website, as well as programme and module handbooks. The team also held meetings with students, teaching and support staff, and senior staff.

1.15 Overall, the evidence reviewed shows the practices and procedures to be effective in practice. All programme specifications produced for the University partners are fully completed according to the respective awarding body requirements. Where variations occur, for example in the requirement by some awarding bodies for module learning outcomes to be explicitly mapped in definitive records to programme-level learning outcomes, the team was informed that this aspect was considered at the formal approval stage.

1.16 The review team found that, for all current Higher National programmes, the College's standard template for programme handbooks, as the definitive record, had been completed. The introduction and use of this common format, and the follow-up sampling and auditing by the Quality Manager, are among a number of steps recently taken by the College to strengthen its processes for oversight of Higher National programmes. The team therefore **affirms** the steps taken to improve consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes, through the implementation of Assessment Boards, a programme handbook template, and formal processes for internal programme approval and periodic review (see also Expectations B1, B6, B8 and C).

1.17 However, notwithstanding the scope permitted for programme teams to customise their handbooks, the team saw evidence of inconsistencies between Higher National programmes in interpreting core section headings and requirements of the standard

template. Although weblinks to the Pearson unit specifications are given, definitive documents for most Higher National programmes lack the expected evidence articulating the relationship between programme-level and unit-level outcomes. Higher National programme-level learning outcomes are not specifically tailored for the College's programmes, so do not 'define the local dimension' as set out in the BTEC Assessment guidelines. Instead, statements are imported directly from BTEC generic qualification specifications.

1.18 In some cases, the handbooks state that 'programme outcomes are identified in each unit in detail', and include or link to unit summaries taken directly from the BTEC generic documentation. These statements therefore do not outline overarching programme-level outcomes that articulate the local integration of composite unit learning outcomes. The team found that, while information provided to students at unit level appears to be well understood, and students are familiar with unit learning outcomes, staff the team met demonstrated a lack of awareness of programme-level outcomes or of the need for these. The team therefore **recommends** that, by July 2016, the College ensures that all Higher National programme specifications include tailored programme-level learning outcomes to meet the requirements of the awarding organisation and reflect the integration of unit content into a coherent programme (see also Expectations A3.2 and B1).

1.19 Within its awarding bodies' regulatory requirements, the College largely fulfils its responsibilities for producing definitive records. Information is made available to students in a number of ways. The team did make a recommendation for the College to produce tailored programme-level learning outcomes that clearly reflect the integration of unit content into a coherent programme. They also affirmed the steps being taken to improve the consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes. The Expectation is met because of the completeness of the information regarding programmes offered in partnership with the awarding bodies and the adequacy of the unit-level learning outcomes for Higher National programmes. However, the level of risk is moderate because of the College's lack of clarity about responsibilities in relation to the requirements of its awarding organisation, and some shortcomings in terms of the rigour and consistency with which the relevant quality assurance procedures were applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

1.20 The awarding partners are ultimately responsible for ensuring that academic standards are set at an appropriate level and are in accordance with their academic frameworks and regulations. The partnership agreements with the awarding bodies encompass compliance with academic regulations, and the respective approval processes set out the framework within which the College works to develop higher education programmes. Programmes delivered on behalf of the University of Greenwich are delivered with multiple partners, and the College therefore has no responsibility for programme development. With the remaining University partners, programme teams are involved in curriculum design and updating, and are responsible for aligning learning outcomes with relevant descriptors, including the FHEQ. Although no new University awards have been approved in the last three years, several College programmes have undergone re-approval events and periodic reviews in that time. For all programme modifications, the College prepares documentation to include rationale, revised modules, learning outcomes or assessments as appropriate, for approval by the respective awarding body. Any changes are approved by the awarding body before the programme specification is updated.

1.21 For Higher National programmes, the College is responsible for determining which units are appropriate for study, within the Pearson rules of combination. The College has recently introduced a new procedure for the internal approval of all new higher education programmes. The new process is designed to ensure that all proposals align with the College's strategic direction, that full and accurate details are available for marketing purposes, and that resources are identified. Details required by the proposal template include level of study and links with national frameworks and QAA standards, market research, intended learning outcomes and assessment mechanisms, and also reference to student and employer engagement with course design. Proposals are considered by the Higher Education Strategy Group, and subsequently by the Performance and Quality Group before final internal sign-off by the former. These processes would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

1.22 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation relating to programme approval and re-approval, awarding partners' academic frameworks and regulations, approval events, partnership agreements, external examiner reports, and programme specifications. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff.

1.23 The review team saw evidence of the College satisfactorily meeting various awarding body requirements for programme review and responding to outcomes for re-approval of programmes. For example, the Bournemouth University Film and Photography framework review in 2015 approved proposed changes to content, learning outcomes and assessment. Teaching staff whom the team met confirmed the close working relationships and effective communication with University link tutors regarding programme updates and maintenance of standards.

1.24 A new HNC/D in Music was successfully approved by Pearson for delivery from September 2015. This was considered under the College-wide internal approval process for further education courses, which the College acknowledged had not been fully adequate for its higher education provision. The College has recently introduced an initial approval process for higher education courses, to include Higher National programmes, but this is so far untested in terms of proposed programmes being approved by the awarding organisation (see paragraph 2.7).

1.25 The team concludes that the College effectively meets the requirements of its awarding partners, and is developing its own internal approaches for initial approval of all higher education programmes, and this ensures that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualifications and are in accordance with relevant awarding partner academic frameworks and regulations. 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

1.26 The College's awarding partners are ultimately responsible for ensuring the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of all credit and qualifications awarded in their names. The College has partnership agreements with its awarding partners which specify its delegated responsibilities within the academic frameworks and regulations with regard to assessment of learning. Programme teams operate the assessment regulations using the detailed handbooks provided by the relevant awarding body. The College has a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy which covers all of its provision, and a statement of Work-based and Placement Learning and its Assessment.

1.27 For Higher National programmes, the College has developed a comprehensive Staff Handbook which details all the assessment, internal verification and quality processes which staff must follow. There is an Assessment and Verification Procedure and the College has now set up its own Assessment Boards for Pearson programmes. College staff design the assignment task and prepare the assessment briefs which are internally verified before being given to students to ensure they are at the correct standard and marking criteria are clear. The programme teams can use the Pearson checking service to ensure that briefs appropriately cover the learning outcomes and meet the national standards. These procedures would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

1.28 The team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the evidence provided by the College, including the Higher Nationals Staff Handbook, Higher Education Quality Manual, Assessment and Verification Procedure, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, assessment regulations, external examiners' reports and programme specifications. The team also held meetings with senior and teaching staff, and students.

1.29 The evidence reviewed shows the practices and procedures to be effective in practice. The team saw evidence that the College works closely with its awarding bodies at senior management and, through the link tutors, at programme level to ensure that academic standards are being met in the operation of assessment processes, for example in setting assignment briefs and marking and moderating students' work. College staff attend development sessions and contribute to other awarding body events covering assessment and moderation. Programme teams clearly understand and operate the assessment regulations pertaining to their course using the detailed handbooks provided by the awarding bodies. External examiner reports confirm that the College is assessing module learning outcomes and meeting programme specification requirements to UK threshold standards and the awarding bodies' own academic standards. Awarding bodies' reports and recent successful re-validations and periodic reviews also demonstrate satisfaction with the College's operation of their academic standards.

1.30 For Higher National programmes, external examiners' reports confirm that the assessments set by College staff allow the unit learning outcomes to be achieved and

assessment criteria ensure that academic standards are at the correct level. However, most Higher National programmes do not have programme-level learning outcomes tailored to the particular local dimensions and circumstances of delivery or mapped to the unit learning outcomes provided by Pearson (see also paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18). In these cases, the achievement of programme outcomes cannot be fully articulated and clearly understood. These findings support the recommendation made in paragraph 1.18.

1.31 External examiners and awarding bodies confirm that the assessment methods and procedures for University and Pearson programmes provide appropriate opportunities for students to achieve learning outcomes. Therefore, despite the recommendation relating to the tailoring of programme-level learning outcomes, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

1.32 The College's course review process takes place in three stages during the academic year. At each campus, the Assistant Principal and Curriculum Manager meet to discuss the in-year review information collated into a comprehensive standard template. The course review information for higher education is fed into Quality Resources Reviews which cover both further and higher education to determine any common themes and identify resources issues in an integrated manner. The College's Performance and Quality Group receive the annual monitoring reports which also go through the respective partner university committee structures. The College conforms to its awarding bodies' periodic review processes.

1.33 For Higher National programmes, the College has its own annual monitoring process which was revised for the 2014-15 academic year and is aligned to BTEC guidelines. In the case of Higher National provision, the College is not required to have a formal periodic review but has designed its own procedure which will be used in the 2015-16 academic year. The College's own processes and its adherence to those of its awarding partners would enable it to meet the Expectation.

1.34 The effectiveness of the College's practices was tested by examining relevant documentation including the Higher Education Quality Manual, minutes of committee meetings, annual monitoring reports, and external examiners' and partner organisations' reports. The team also held discussions with support, academic and senior staff, and students.

1.35 The evidence reviewed showed the procedures to be effective in practice. The College staff maintain good working relationships with their awarding bodies through link tutors, including attendance at meetings and staff development events to ensure they fully understand the requirements of programme monitoring and review. External examiners and link tutors confirm that UK threshold standards are achieved and the academic standards of the awarding body are maintained. The review team saw evidence, through partner review reports and relevant minutes of committee meetings, that the College complies with the annual monitoring requirements of its awarding bodies. The College contributes fully to periodic reviews, framework reviews and degree scheme reviews carried out by partner universities. In 2015, there were four such reviews of higher education programmes and each had a positive outcome. The team saw evidence that the College actively responded to the review reports and developed appropriate action plans which were accepted by the universities. The College's new periodic review framework and documentation for Pearson is comprehensive and will address the UK threshold standards in a four-yearly cycle.

1.36 The evidence from documentation and meetings clearly shows that the College has appropriate systems in place for programme monitoring and review with regard to maintaining academic standards and is operating effectively in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners. Therefore, the 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

1.37 The awarding partners have ultimate responsibility for making use of external and independent expertise to set and maintain academic standards. As part of the process for programme approval, re-approval and review, the awarding bodies require external and independent expertise at the appropriate events. External examiners are appointed for each programme by the awarding partners, and their reports comment on whether academic standards have successfully been achieved and maintained by the College. The awarding bodies carry out periodic reviews of their academic provision and these events include external panel members. While the awarding body is responsible for the appointment of the external panel member, in accordance with their criteria, the College may offer a nomination. For Higher National provision, the College has recently developed a process for periodic review on a four-yearly basis, with the first review due in spring 2016. The Periodic Review Panel for these programmes will include external representation which can be an academic or an employer. These approaches would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

1.38 The review team considered the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining awarding bodies' regulations and procedures, their criteria for the appointment of external examiners and panel members, and the College's procedures for periodic review of Higher National programmes.

1.39 The review team found these processes to work effectively in practice. External examiners are involved at appropriate stages of the quality assurance processes and their reports confirm that the academic standards of the awards are being maintained. They are also invited to comment on proposed module and programme changes. The review team welcomes the College's proposal to include external representation on the forthcoming Periodic Review Panels for Higher National programmes, although the criteria for their appointment is not included in the draft procedure.

1.40 The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that, overall, the College is effectively managing its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards and making use of external expertise. The College works in accordance with the regulations and procedures of its awarding partners and has recently developed its own processes for the periodic review of its Higher National provision. The team therefore concludes that this 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 other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.41 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All of the Expectations for this judgement area are met with low risk, the exception being Expectation A2.2 which is met but with a moderate level of risk. In Expectation A2.2, the team makes one recommendation and one affirmation. The recommendation is to ensure that all Higher National programme specifications include tailored programme-level learning outcomes that reflect the integration of unit content into a coherent programme. The team also affirms the steps being taken to improve the consistency and rigour of Higher National programmes through the implementation of Assessment Boards, a programme handbook template and formal processes for internal programme approval and periodic review. The level of risk for Expectation A2.2 is moderate because of the College's lack of clarity about responsibilities as required by the awarding organisation, and also some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which the relevant quality assurance procedures are applied.

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

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

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

Findings

2.1 The ultimate responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes rests with the awarding partners. The partnership agreements with the awarding bodies encompass compliance with academic regulations, and the respective approval processes set out the framework within which the College works to develop higher education programmes (see also paragraphs 1.20 and 1.21). The College considers the Swindon and Wiltshire Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan to inform its growth plan and determine future programme development. The College has produced a new Higher Education Quality Manual that sets out a revised internal procedure for programme development, design and approval, to confirm that the new course meets the strategic needs of the College and to produce an overarching business case for resource requirements. According to this process, each proposal will be considered by both the Performance and Quality Group and Higher Education Strategy Group, before being signed off by the latter. Documentation in accordance with the Higher Education Quality Manual has been prepared for one new Higher National proposal, which had yet to be formally considered under this new procedure. Programmes to be run with a University partner would then be developed according to the relevant awarding body's process, with level of study and links to national frameworks and benchmark statements being evidenced.

2.2 Under the new internal higher education course approval procedure, indicative timelines are set out in the Higher Education Quality Manual for stages towards completion of the process. Within these, exceptional provision is made for Higher National programmes proposed in response to an identified progression need for the College's further education students to be processed more quickly than the standard timeline would permit. Approval of proposals for new Higher National programmes at the Higher Education Strategy Group precedes the request for approval by the awarding organisation. For Higher National programmes, College staff design the assessments for, in most cases, standard BTEC units, samples of which are checked and approved by Pearson. The adherence of the College to its awarding partners' formal procedures for programme design, development and approval, and its own internal processes, would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.3 The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation and events relating to programme design, approval and re-approval, partnership agreements, programme specifications, and minutes of meetings. It also held discussions with teaching, support and senior staff, employers and students.

2.4 The review team saw evidence that programme teams have a good understanding of the revalidation requirements of its University partners and this had enabled successful outcomes for the three most recent re-approval events with Bournemouth University, The Royal Agricultural University and the University of Bath. This was evidenced in the awarding bodies' reports and confirmations of satisfactory responses to the outcomes of these events.

2.5 The review team also saw examples of feedback from students informing proposals for minor programme and assessment changes through Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs), and through involvement in programme review. There are also several examples of employers' feedback influencing changes to modules or units. The College also seeks feedback from external examiners with regard to programme changes, examples being in Early Years and Social Work programmes.

2.6 An HNC/D in Music has recently been introduced to meet the needs of BTEC level 3 students wishing to continue studying at the College at a higher level. The programme team discussed the design with students before choosing units and writing assignments to reflect students' vocational interests. The review team saw evidence from the approval documentation that the College had a clear rationale for the new programme, and had extensively involved students in its development.

2.7 The College's revised internal approval process is newly established and as yet not tested, although thorough draft documentation for the first HNC/D programme to be considered had been completed and shows evidence of student and staff engagement. The team found that the introduction of this process to encompass Higher National programmes addresses previous weaknesses in strategic oversight of the curriculum approval processes for this provision. These findings support the affirmation made in paragraph 1.16.

2.8 However, the review team noted the failure of the College's internal programme approval processes to identify the awarding organisation's requirement for Higher National programme teams to articulate tailored programme-level learning outcomes, and to show how these relate to unit learning outcomes (see also paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18). This means that the rationale for the inclusion of particular unit content and the inter-relationship between learning outcomes and assessment in the overall design of Higher National programmes is not explicit. These findings support the recommendation made in paragraph 1.18.

2.9 In accordance with the academic regulations of its awarding partners, the College largely fulfils its responsibilities for designing, developing and approving programmes. The review team does repeat one recommendation for the College to produce tailored programme-level learning outcomes that clearly reflect the integration of unit content into a coherent programme. The review team again affirmed the steps being taken to improve the consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes, including development of revised formal processes for internal approval of higher education provision. It is hoped that this development will help to address the weaknesses outlined in the recommendation. Despite the recommendation, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The level of risk is moderate because of some lack of clarity about responsibilities in relation to the requirements of its awarding organisation, Pearson.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

Findings

2.10 The College has a Higher Education Admissions Policy, which is available on the College website. The policy covers the aims and processes that are in place for admissions as well as information for students with differing circumstances. Details of the right to appeal an admissions decision are also included in the policy. The application route to the College varies depending on the selected programme and the awarding partner. The College has set up a Higher Education Admissions Team which processes admissions for students applying for programmes with Bournemouth University, University of Bath and University of Greenwich, whereas Bath Spa University handles all admissions for their programmes, but with students being sent to the College for approval. Admissions staff also check that entry requirements are met and that the process is clear and fair. Training is provided to all staff working in admissions. The College is also in the process of implementing Admissions Statements for programmes on offer to provide all the admissions information to prospective students in one place. The processes outlined for recruitment and admissions would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.11 The review team examined the effectiveness of the recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures by analysing documentation including the Higher Education Admissions Policy, and by analysing the information made available to applicants and prospective students. It also held meetings with students and teaching and support staff.

2.12 The review team found that the policies and procedures for recruitment, selection and admission work effectively in practice. Despite the differing requirements of the awarding partners, staff and students clearly understand the admissions procedures and know where to find the necessary information. The team also saw evidence that the College gathers and makes use of feedback on admissions processes, including from students, although this is still in its infancy. Internal review through self-monitoring the admissions procedure, while present, is again in its early stages.

2.13 While the College's approach to admissions allows it to effectively fulfil the requirements set out by the different awarding partners, it also recognises the challenges of doing so. To guide staff training and their understanding while working with the different awarding partners, the College felt it necessary to produce an admissions handbook. The handbook has been drafted but is awaiting final approval. The team therefore **affirms** the steps taken towards the final publication of a comprehensive staff admissions handbook.

2.14 The evidence from documentation and meetings shows that the College has recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures which adhere to the principles of fair admission. The team affirms the steps taken by the Higher Education Admissions Team to publish a comprehensive admissions handbook for staff. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (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

2.15 The College has a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy that includes its core values and sets out clear expectations of the commitment required to ensure student development and achievement. The Strategy is applicable to further and higher education, is updated annually and is also available in the Higher Education Quality Manual. New staff are provided with a mandatory induction programme and are supported in delivering higher education by an experienced learning coach. From 2015 onwards, higher education staff will be expected to work towards gaining Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognition. In addition, a new teaching observation process has been developed for higher education for 2015-16. The Staff Development Policy includes new guidance on research and scholarly activity, with staff allocated 15 days for continuing professional development. The Higher Education Manager also works with the Director of Teaching, Learning and Student Experience to provide planned and targeted higher education staff development events.

2.16 Specific aspects of the College's virtual learning environment (VLE) have been newly developed to further support higher education teaching, learning and student development. General and programme-specific information and resources are available to students through the VLE with each programme having its own dedicated space to support learning and teaching. Students can provide feedback on teaching, learning and assessment through focus groups, SSLCs, unit evaluations, and various surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS). The quality of learning and teaching is reviewed through annual monitoring and reviews and student feedback mechanisms.

2.17 A new higher education structure was introduced in the academic year 2014-15, with oversight of provision by the Higher Education Strategy Group. The College has a range of meetings where higher education is discussed. These include the Senior Leadership Group, Senior Management Team (SMT), Performance and Quality Group, College Management Group, Higher Education Strategy Group, Higher Education Teaching and Learning Group, Higher Education Student Support Group, and Course Team meetings at programme level. The Vice Principal Higher Education and Development is a member of all of these excluding the Performance and Quality Group and the College Management Group, although he may attend if required. The Higher Education Manager is a member of all except the Senior Leadership Group and the Senior Management Team. The College's processes would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.18 The review team examined the effectiveness of the teaching and learning procedures by reading relevant documentation relating to the new structure for higher education, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, the Higher Education Quality Manual, Staff Development Policy, Higher Education Teaching Observation process, terms of reference and minutes of higher education committees, and external examiner reports, and by examining the content of the VLE. The review team also held meetings with the Principal, teaching staff, support staff, senior staff, employers and students.

2.19 The review team saw evidence of positive feedback from students about their learning experiences. Students whom the team met felt their voice was heard and actions

are taken in response to the points they raise, including the provision of dedicated space in the Learning Resource Centres on each campus. Students also agreed that feedback on their assignments is helpful and they valued the support from, and availability of, their tutors.

2.20 The College's Staff Development Policy is supported by the Management Guidelines for 2015-16 in which lecturing and associated duties are referred to and there is remission for continuing professional development. The New Staff Induction Checklist for managers includes a meeting with the learning coach, although it was noted by the team that the checklist is generic and not specific to higher education. Staff development days provide a range of sessions, for example on the new Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy which was developed for higher education for the academic year 2015-16. The team saw evidence that the allocation of 15 days per annum for research and scholarly activity is used in various ways including conference attendance and presentation, and updating specialist knowledge, including engagement with current industry practice.

2.21 The review team heard that the College reviews and enhances teaching practices and learning opportunities including through approval and periodic review, the annual quality cycle, recruitment and selection of academic staff, and peer observations. However, these tend to operate primarily at programme level, with the College's own quality processes running in tandem with those of the awarding bodies rather than a strategic approach being adopted. The College has developed some of its own higher education policies and procedures, for example for its Higher National programmes. There is a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy but this is College-wide and does not clearly and adequately articulate the College's approach to higher education.

2.22 The Performance and Quality Group meetings discuss the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and performance data. The Performance and Quality Group is not solely dedicated to higher education, although issues relating to higher education normally form an early part of the agenda for each meeting. A review of the minutes from the Performance and Quality Group confirmed that higher education was included; however, evidence of the discussions held which related specifically to higher education was limited. Therefore it is unclear to the review team how all aspects of higher education are routinely and consistently captured within this key senior meeting. The Higher Education Strategy Group is dedicated to higher education and the terms of reference state that its purpose is to oversee the strategic development and operation of the College's higher education provision. Although the operational aspects were evident from the sample of minutes provided, the strategic elements were less clear. While it is acknowledged that the College has developed its higher education structure, including the appointment of a Higher Education Manager role, and that higher education is discussed at senior committee meetings, there is limited evidence as to how the College's deliberative structures systematically review and oversee the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices for higher education. The team therefore **recommends** that, by December 2016, the College strengthens and makes more rigorous its oversight of quality assurance and enhancement for the higher education provision (see also Expectation B8).

2.23 The College has a number of strengths in teaching and learning, with students valuing the knowledge and expertise of tutors and the opportunities to develop their employability skills. However, although the Expectation is met, the level of risk is moderate because of the weakness identified in the ways in which the College captures, articulates and systematically reviews and enhances its higher education provision.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.24 The College states that it has a strategic approach to student development and achievement from application to completion. The Higher Education Quality Cycle includes regular consideration of student development and achievement. The College makes available specialist resources at different campuses. Examples include a commercial farm and Animal Centre, editing suites and fully equipped photography studios. Each campus also has its own Learning Resource Centre (LRC). The Quality and Resource Reviews (QRRs) take place once a term as part of the Higher Education Quality Cycle but cover both further and higher education provision. The reviews enable the College to identify where investment in resources is required.

2.25 All students have an induction to higher education and programme teams follow a checklist to prepare students for study. Each student has a personal tutor and tutorial processes have been recently updated. Information on support available to students and staff is on the College's VLE. Students have access to a range of information including programme information, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and the Equality and Diversity Policy; staff have a separate area, the staffroom, which provides information specific to higher education. Programme handbooks provide students with information to enable them to succeed and they include unit descriptors, assessment calendars and reading lists. The processes the College has in place would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.26 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements and resources by scrutinising relevant documents relating to the policies, procedures and handbooks that describe the resources and support available to students, and reviewing information available on the VLE. The team also held meetings with students and teaching and support staff.

2.27 The team found that the procedures for implementing, monitoring and evaluating arrangements and resources work effectively in practice. The team saw evidence that the QRRs, along with outcomes from annual monitoring reports and course reviews, are discussed at meetings of the SMT and Higher Education Strategy Group where identified actions are discussed and confirmed.

2.28 Students whom the team met were positive about the support available at the College, from application through induction, and during their programme of study. They felt that they had ample opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences. The majority of these students confirmed that they receive programme handbooks, in various formats, and those who were unsure knew where to access information about their programme and would ask their tutors if necessary. All students felt that their voice is heard and that they are respected as individuals. Staff reinforced the College's commitment to listening to the student voice, from senior level through to those supporting the student experience.

2.29 Information on the VLE is being further enhanced and a new higher education student community area (HESCA) is currently being developed. Students whom the team met were aware of the range of information available on the VLE and found it helpful. However, they did comment on the inconsistent use of it by staff.

2.30 The College had identified a weakness in the tutorial system and, as a result, established a Tutorial Working Group, reporting to the Higher Education Strategy Group, to create more structure within programmes. One outcome of this process was the identification of five graduate attributes for tutorials from 2015-16 onwards and these are set out in the Graduate Attributes Tutorial Booklet available to staff. Staff whom the team met were aware of the new process and guidance. All students whom the review team met had some experience of tutorials but this varied between one-to-one tutorials, optional tutorials and individual meetings and, for some, it was part of the weekly lessons. Some, but not all, of the students had heard of the graduate attributes. The review team **affirms** the actions taken to strengthen the tutorial process including the introduction of the Graduate Attributes Tutorial Booklet.

2.31 The review team agreed that there is evidence of ongoing investment in higher education facilities at the four main campuses and students spoke positively of their experiences across the different campuses. The review team affirms the actions taken by the College to strengthen the tutorial process. The College has arrangements and resources in place to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential and therefore the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.32 The College's formal mechanisms for engaging students in quality assurance and enhancement include: the student representative scheme; student meetings; student focus groups; module/unit evaluations; annual course reviews; thrice-yearly course review meetings; College-based and national surveys; as members of, and by feeding into, programme validation and review events; discussions with external examiners; and the Student Parliament. Each programme has a course representative who is able to attend SSLC meetings with programme leaders. The College has a number of documents in place that include the Learner Voice Policy, Student Representative Handbook and the programme handbooks where student engagement is outlined. In addition, students regularly provide informal feedback to programme teams, either directly or via the Student Union executives on each campus and the higher education student representatives. The student voice is further supported by having Student Engagement Officers present at each campus. These policies and procedures would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.33 The review team examined the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in place to engage students by examining documentation including the Learner Voice Policy, Student Representative Handbook, programme handbooks, sources of student feedback, details of the student representation system, and minutes and terms of reference of relevant groups and committees. The team also held meetings with teaching and support staff, senior staff, the Principal, and students.

2.34 The review team found evidence from documentation and meetings that a number of mechanisms exist for the student voice to be heard across the College. The College engages students as partners at programme level through their attendance at SSLC meetings. The team found evidence of changes that have come about as a result of student feedback and discussion at these meetings, including setting informal submission dates for work to provide greater structure on a course. Previously, there were no SSLC meetings for Higher National students to attend, as these programmes followed the approach taken for further education provision. However, the College recognised this weakness and introduced SSLC meetings for students on Pearson programmes. The review team therefore **affirms** the actions taken to introduce Staff-Student Liaison Committees for Higher National programmes to bring them in line with other higher education provision.

2.35 Despite the positive steps taken with SSLC meetings and the opportunities for course representatives to meet with SMT three times a year, course representatives met by the team identified a lack of formal engagement between themselves and Students' Union executives. In addition, formal engagement is also affected by the lack of higher-level committees at which student representatives are standing members. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that, by September 2016, the College strengthens and formalises the involvement of higher education student representatives as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.36 The team saw evidence of training being provided for Students' Union executives by the Student Engagement Officers. However, the training does not extend to course representatives and tends to focus on wider issues, such as the Prevent agenda, rather than the more specific requirements of the role. The training that is currently provided is completed some time after representatives have been in post. Representatives whom the

team met stated that they had not yet received training for their roles. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that, by September 2016, the College ensures that training for all higher education student representatives is carried out in a timely and consistent manner to prepare and equip them for their respective roles.

2.37 Overall, the College has a number of ways to gather student views and there is ample evidence of changes being made as a result of this feedback. While the College has recognised and started to address some of the weaknesses in the student representative system, an example being the introduction of SSLC meetings for Higher National students, some weaknesses remain. As a result, the review team has made two recommendations regarding more timely and consistent training for all student representatives, and strengthening and formalising student representatives' involvement as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Although the team concludes that the Expectation is met, the associated level of risk is moderate because there are some weaknesses in the operation of the student representation system.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.38 The College operates within the academic regulations of its awarding partners in providing, marking and internally verifying appropriate assessments at the correct level (see also paragraphs 1.26 and 1.27). The standards of the awards are set by the awarding partners and the delegated responsibilities are defined in partnership agreements, approval processes and BTEC guidelines for Higher National programmes. To ensure College staff are fully informed of assessment regulations for the universities' programmes, they attend staff development sessions (in the case of Bournemouth University), are provided with detailed handbooks (University of Bath), and hold meetings between the link tutor and Programme Coordinators (Bath Spa, Greenwich and the Royal Agricultural Universities). In addition, for University of Bath programmes, there are annual course team meetings with the staff of the University Learning Partnership office.

2.39 College staff who are new to higher education assessment are mentored by experienced assessors who moderate all the assessment decisions in the first year or until there is full confidence in the capability of the staff member. The universities' regulations and the Higher National assessment and verification procedures are made available online via websites or University intranets and handbooks, and the College's intranet. The Higher Education Quality Manual sets out the College's approach to making reasonable adjustments to avoid any student being at a disadvantage. The College complies with robust University regulations for the recognition of prior learning where appropriate. The College has its own clearly articulated scheme for Higher National programmes to recognise an individual's prior learning which is set out in the Higher Education Quality Manual. The College's own processes and procedures for assessment and its approach to complying with its awarding partner regulations would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.40 The review team considered the effectiveness of the processes and procedures by examining documentation such as the Assessment and Verification procedure, the Higher Nationals Staff Handbook, Higher Education Quality Manual, external examiners' reports, programme handbooks, and reports of its awarding partner organisations. The review team also held meetings with senior and academic staff, and students.

2.41 The evidence showed the processes and procedures to be effective in practice. At University validation events, the alignment of learning outcomes with the FHEQ is checked. External examiner reports subsequently confirm the appropriateness of the learning outcomes.

2.42 Staff are clear about their responsibilities in the assessment process for their particular programme and assessment decisions are internally verified or moderated by staff in accordance with the pertinent regulations. The Vice Principal for Higher Education and Development and the Higher Education Manager play a key part in supporting staff and ensuring that regulations are understood and implemented. The team saw evidence that the assignments designed by College staff across higher education programmes are checked through the internal verification scheme to ensure they are clear and enable students to meet the intended learning outcomes. They are then sent to the relevant University or

external examiner, or in the case of Pearson they can be submitted to the assignment checking service. External examiner reports show that assignments are set at the correct academic standard, marking is accurate and outcomes are comparable to other higher education institutions.

2.43 Examination Boards for University programmes are prescribed by the awarding bodies and the College complies. The College has produced its own protocol for Assessment Boards for Higher National programmes which operated for the first time at the end of the 2014-15 academic year. The College intends to use external examiners' feedback to guide its evaluation of the Assessment Board Terms of Reference. These findings support the affirmation made in paragraph 1.16.

2.44 Programme handbooks contain clear information about awarding partners' processes and regulations, learning outcomes, grading criteria, and regulations regarding requests for extensions, late submission penalties and mitigating circumstances. Students whom the review team met were clear about assessment briefs, criteria and marking processes including internal verification and moderation. They also appreciate the level of support from staff in providing timely, detailed and constructive feedback which allows them to improve their academic achievements. External examiner reports also comment positively about the high quality of feedback to students.

2.45 The College operates appropriate procedures which enable equitable, valid and reliable assessment including for the recognition of prior learning. They provide suitable opportunities for all students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes for the award of credit or qualification. The College works closely with its awarding bodies and complies with their regulatory frameworks and the Pearson guidelines for assessment and moderation. The review team again affirms the steps being taken to improve consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes through the implementation of Assessment Boards. 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 (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.46 The awarding partners define the role of the external examiner in their academic regulations and are responsible for their appointment. The University partners acknowledge the external examiners' report and the College provides a response and action plan within their annual monitoring processes. Consideration of external examiner reports and actions identified is routinely included in the College's programme monitoring and review processes, for example in annual monitoring reports and in meetings with awarding partners. External examiner reports are fed into SSLC meetings and this is being extended to Higher National programmes from 2015-16 onwards. The College is responsible for sharing reports with its students through SSLCs. The College's procedures and its adherence to those of its awarding partners would allow it to meet the Expectation.

2.47 The review team examined the effectiveness of these procedures in practice by examining a range of documentation including external examiner reports and associated responses, annual monitoring reports, minutes of relevant meetings where reports are considered, and information on the VLE. It also held meetings with students, teaching staff and senior staff.

2.48 The review team saw evidence that the College and its awarding bodies consider external examiner reports during annual programme monitoring and review. The College also now conducts an annual thematic analysis of external examiner reports, which previously had been carried out informally.

2.49 External examiner reports consistently show that academic standards are being met and that feedback on marked work is thorough and helpful for students. External examiners see all assessment briefs before they are made available to students and may be invited to comment on programme changes.

2.50 In practice, the sharing of external examiner reports with students is variable across programmes. This is in spite of the College's annual report for the academic year 2013-14 identifying as an action that external examiner reports should be made available in full to students during the following academic year. Students whom the team met confirmed that some had met their external examiner, some had seen the reports at SSLC meetings but others had not, while some were not aware of how to access them but would ask their tutor. Teaching staff whom the team met confirmed that practice was variable, with some reports being on the VLE but others not, but that they are shared through student representatives and SSLC meetings. Therefore, the team **recommends** that, by September 2016, the College ensures that external examiner reports are consistently made available to all higher education students.

2.51 Overall, the role of external examiners is clear and well embedded in the quality assurance systems, and the College makes effective use of reports. The review team made one recommendation to consistently make external examiners' reports available to all higher education students. Despite this recommendation, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.52 The College has its own programme monitoring processes and also adheres to the requirements of its awarding bodies for monitoring and review. For Higher National programmes, the College has its own annual monitoring process which has been updated for first use at the end of the academic year 2015-16 (see also paragraphs 1.32 and 1.33). The College's own processes and its adherence to those of its awarding partners would enable it to meet the Expectation.

2.53 The effectiveness of the College's practices was tested by examining relevant documentation including the Higher Education Quality Manual, minutes of committee meetings, annual monitoring reports, and external examiner and partner organisation reports. The review team also held discussions with senior, academic and support staff, employers, and students.

2.54 Overall, the evidence reviewed showed the procedures to work in practice. The review team saw evidence that the College, in its annual monitoring processes, makes effective use of a wide range of information including external examiner reports, unit/module evaluations, SSLC meetings, NSS outcomes, data about achievement, recruitment and retention, and student input into course review meetings. The processes are reflective, analytical and adequately identify good practice and areas for development. Action plans are formulated and subsequently monitored on a campus basis each term through the course review process. Course reviews involve the Programme Leader, Curriculum Manager, student representatives and Higher Education Manager meeting with the campus Assistant Principal to discuss progress and identify new actions if necessary. These reviews feed into a Quality Resource Review process to identify resource issues on a cross-College basis. For University programmes, action plans are reviewed through the relevant partners' processes in addition to the College course reviews.

2.55 The annual monitoring reports are scrutinised and monitored by the Performance and Quality Group but the route to SMT for strategic overview is not clearly stated in the documentation or articulated by staff (see also paragraph 2.22). Despite changes that have been made to the higher education structure, there are weaknesses in the College's reporting lines and committee structures which means that clear responsibilities at each management level and strategic leadership are not being fully demonstrated (see paragraph 2.22). These findings support the recommendation made in paragraph 2.22.

2.56 Professional support staff do not have direct input to annual monitoring reports which are written by the Programme Coordinator with support from the relevant programme team. Instead, support staff liaise with the Higher Education Manager to respond to issues raised and give feedback throughout the academic year. The Guidance for Course Review and Higher Education Quality Manual indicate the range of inputs to the process but do not suggest student involvement or formal employer feedback, although the Higher Education Structure and Quality Cycle document does specify student involvement. Student representatives of Animal Science and Health and Social Care programmes whom the team met did confirm that they had been involved in annual monitoring and course review meetings.

2.57 Periodic reviews with awarding bodies involve stakeholders such as employers, students, academic link tutors, external examiners and independent academics not connected to the programme, and delivery staff. Student opinion is particularly important with attendance as panel members at University partner periodic review events, and as student and graduate panel members for forthcoming Higher National reviews. College programmes which have been through these processes in 2015 have been successful and any recommendations have been acted upon appropriately. Outcomes and actions from periodic reviews are discussed at the Performance and Quality Group. For Higher National programmes, the College will in future use its own periodic review process, the first ones being for Engineering in spring 2016. These findings support the affirmation in paragraph 1.16.

2.58 Overall, the College's adherence to awarding partners' annual monitoring and periodic review processes and its own quality assurance procedures allows it to operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and reviewing its higher education programmes. However, the team repeats a recommendation to further strengthen and make more rigorous the oversight of quality assurance and enhancement beyond programme level. The review team again affirms the steps taken to improve consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes through the implementation of formal periodic review processes. While the team concludes that the Expectation is met, the associated level of risk is moderate because there are some weaknesses in the operation of the College's academic governance structure.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

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

2.59 The College has a Comments, Compliments, Complaints Procedure which sets out the respective processes, responsibilities and timescales. The Quality Manager has overall responsibility for complaints and appeals and the document is reviewed annually by SMT. Students are able to make a complaint informally, usually to their tutors or Curriculum Manager, or formally under the College's four-stage process. The information is made available to students online and in programme handbooks. Once they have been through the College's procedure, students would then have the option, if still unresolved, to make use of awarding body processes. For appeals against academic results, students are referred to the awarding partner's procedures. These processes would enable the College to meet the Expectation.

2.60 The review team tested the effectiveness of the procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints by examining documents such as the Comments, Compliments, Complaints Procedure, and the Students' Union advocacy statements surrounding academic appeals. It also held meetings with teaching and support staff and students.

2.61 The review team found that the procedures for academic appeals and student complaints work effectively in practice. The College has clear procedures in place with staff and students whom the team met either knowing how the process would operate or where to find the necessary information should they require it. Many concerns raised by students with tutors and Curriculum Managers are discussed informally and resolved at a local level. Students whom the team met were satisfied with the ability of staff to resolve these issues and there has not been a need for any higher education students to make a formal complaint.

2.62 The College has clear procedures in place for making complaints or appeals. Staff and students have a clear understanding of the procedures or where to find the information should they require it. Therefore, the team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.63 The College has responsibility for arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the awarding bodies. All its higher education courses have some form of work-related learning. The Work-based and Placement Learning and its Assessment document is the College's overarching policy statement regarding learning that takes place in the workplace. It sets out general principles and information on responsibilities for academic standards and quality; responsibilities of partners providing work-based or placement learning; responsibilities and entitlements of learners; information, support and guidance; staff development; and monitoring and review. The statement requires that all parties involved in the process must have their responsibilities defined, communicated and agreed. Programme teams are required to comply with this policy and maintain evidence of how they enact and meet these principles.

2.64 Higher education students are encouraged to source their own placements, although support is provided where necessary by programme teams. In several areas, for example the Fd Motorsport Engineering and Fd Animal Science and Management, the College's own extensive facilities, at Castle Combe race track and Lackham campus respectively, also provide some students with opportunities for industry-standard work placements. A number of students each year undertake placements overseas. For the BSc (Hons) Social Work programme, the responsibility of matching students to employers rests with the programme team. Information for students and employers is also provided in placement guides and handbooks.

2.65 The review team tested the College's arrangements for implementing and managing work-based learning opportunities by considering a range of documents and information, including the Work-based and Placement Learning and its Assessment document, and examples of placement guides and handbooks, placement visit reports and completed risk assessment forms. The team also met senior staff, teaching and support staff, students and employers.

2.66 The review team found some confusion and lack of understanding at College level about the distinctions between placement, work-based and work-related learning, and the respective relationship between these activities and the achievement of learning outcomes. While most activities do not require direct employer assessment of learning outcomes, several do require the employer to feed back on or grade the student's performance, skills and capabilities. For example, the BA (Hons) Film Production and Cinematography and BA (Hons) Photography professional placement guide and logbook includes a 'company appraisal of your performance' which rates the student A-E on a range of individual qualities, capabilities and aptitudes. Students also critically reflect in the logbook and this feeds into a graded assessment.

2.67 The review team found the statement on Work-based and Placement Learning and its Assessment to be a potentially useful document which sets out what should happen in practice at programme level. Although in many ways the statement closely reflects Chapter B10 of the Quality Code, there is no reference within the statement as to where College oversight lies and how the implementation of these principles should be monitored. Although

the team saw evidence of risk assessments being undertaken for placements, there remains a lack of central arrangements or processes for due diligence and oversight of the students who choose to undertake placements or work experience overseas.

2.68 The review team was informed that the Performance and Quality Group currently oversees workplace learning arrangements, through annual monitoring reports which include evaluation at programme level. However, the terms of reference and meeting minutes for the Performance and Quality Group show little reference to higher education workplace learning. The senior staff whom the team met confirmed that strengthening oversight at College level is a development point for the current academic year and that the College's new Work Experience Team would be extending its current remit for further education to also encompass higher education work-based activity, including reporting to the Performance and Quality Group. The initial focus of the Team will be on building up knowledge and records of higher education placements and documentation for management information purposes, and on supporting students. The team saw no evidence of any firm timescale for this oversight to be established for higher education students. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by July 2016, the College implements College-level oversight of clear and robust arrangements for placement and work-based learning activities that include definitions of the various types of workplace learning, and are proportionate to the nature and requirements of the respective programme and their unit/module learning outcomes.

2.69 The review team was informed that differing documentation for students and placement providers is developed within programmes in accordance with their respective needs. It saw evidence that, for programmes such as Early Years and Social Work in particular, placement documentation for students and employers is comprehensive and sets out clear responsibilities and lines of communication. Students whom the team met confirmed that they generally felt clear about their responsibilities and entitlements when on placement. Several spoke very positively of the excellent quality of opportunities and support available to them through the College's resources such as the Castle Combe race track and the Lackham campus.

2.70 However, in the case of Higher National programmes, the review team found that the status of the placement or work-based learning experience, and whether this was required to successfully complete the programme outcomes, was less clear. For example, the team was informed that HND Criminal Justice students do not do formal work placements and so lacked equivalent documentation. Yet the 2014-15 programme End of Year Review notes that work experience placements are again developing well, and that current first-year students have already found possible placements. The programme handbook also notes that 'in year two learners are required to participate in work experience in a relevant Criminal Justice organisation'. The review team also found that, for several programmes, there was no evidence of signed agreements setting out the relationship and responsibilities between the College and placement or work-based learning providers, as expected under the College's own policy. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by September 2016, the College ensures that the principles of its statement of Work-based Learning and its Assessment are fully implemented at programme and unit/module level.

2.71 Although appropriate arrangements are largely in place for the most substantial work placements (notably Social Work, Early Years, Counselling, Animal Science and Management), the review team found weaknesses in a number of areas including: lack of clarity about the responsibilities and requirements for placements and providers in other forms of workplace learning; a lack of clarity over definition and differentiation of various types of placement, work-based or work-related learning which inhibits the determination of associated risk and of appropriate and proportionate arrangements for documentation; no formal processes for maintaining oversight of the placement, work-based and work-related activities undertaken by students, or of the systematic completion of adequate

documentation, including agreements with employers, learning contracts or risk assessments, which outline respective roles and responsibilities; and no formal processes for checking on and supporting students while on placement. The team does, however, recognise that the College is aware that oversight of placement arrangements is an area for improvement. Therefore the review team concludes that the Expectation is not met and the level of risk is moderate due to weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's governance structure, and insufficient emphasis being given to assuring the quality of learning opportunities in its planning processes.

Expectation: Not met

Level of risk: Moderate

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

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

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.73 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Nine of the ten applicable Expectations are met. The risk to the quality of learning opportunities within these nine met Expectations is low for five Expectations. However, Expectations B1, B3, B5 and B8, while met, are associated with moderate levels of risk. Expectation B10 is not met with a moderate level of risk.

2.74 The review team makes six new recommendations in this section:

- strengthen and make more rigorous the College's oversight of quality assurance and enhancement for higher education provision (Expectations B3 and B8)
- ensure that training for all higher education student representatives is carried out in a timely and consistent manner to prepare and equip them for their respective roles (Expectation B5)
- strengthen and formalise the involvement of higher education student representatives as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience (Expectation B5)
- ensure that external examiners' reports are consistently made available to all higher education students (Expectation B7)
- ensure the principles of the College's statement of Work-based and Placement Learning and its Assessment are fully implemented at programme and unit/module level (Expectation B10)
- implement College-level oversight of clear and robust arrangements for placement and work-based learning activities that include definitions of the various types of workplace learning, and are proportionate to the nature and requirements of the respective programme and their unit/module learning outcomes (Expectation B10).

2.75 The review team repeats the recommendation from Part A about ensuring that all Higher National programme specifications include tailored programme-level learning outcomes to meet the requirements of Pearson and reflect the integration of unit content into a coherent programme (Expectation B1).

2.76 The review team also made three new affirmations: the steps taken towards the final publication of a comprehensive staff admissions handbook (Expectation B2); the actions taken to strengthen the tutorial process including the introduction of the Graduate Attributes Tutorial Booklet (Expectation B4); and the actions taken to introduce Staff-Student Liaison Committees for Higher National programmes to bring them in line with other higher education provision (Expectation B5). The review team also repeats an affirmation from Part A regarding the steps taken to improve consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes through the implementation of Assessment Boards, a programme handbook template, and formal processes for internal programme approval and periodic review (Expectations B1, B6 and B8).

2.77 The moderate risks in Part B indicate some weaknesses in the operation of part of the College's governance structure, lack of clarity about responsibilities, insufficient emphasis given to assuring quality in planning processes, and some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which quality assurance procedures have been applied. Where the College has recognised weaknesses, the review team saw little evidence of developed plans at this stage that are fully embedded in the College's operational planning.

2.78 The review team therefore concludes that, overall, the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement** to meet UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Statements of the College's overall principles, core values, charter, mission statement and policies are available online. The College website links to a dedicated section on University Level Courses, which includes details on how to apply; course locations; a guide to qualifications; programme specifications or definitive documentation for all courses; and information on fees and funding support, accommodation and open events. The website is kept up to date by the marketing team who, alongside Programme Coordinators, check the accuracy of information. Further quality assurance checks are undertaken by the Higher Education Admissions Coordinator, the Higher Education Manager and the Vice Principal Higher Education and Development. The College also publishes a hard copy prospectus for its higher education provision, for which the College has a process for checking by internal and external stakeholders, and final approval by SMT. All marketing material relating to programmes awarded by University partners is approved by their respective marketing teams.

3.2 Information for current students is published on the VLE through programme handbooks and other documents including additional reading material. The VLE is updated by the Information and Learning Technology (ILT) team for generic information and by programme teams for programme-specific information. Students are also provided with hard copy handbooks which, for University-awarded provision, follow the required format and content of the awarding body. The College has a Higher Education Quality Manual for staff which contains links to full policies and procedures on the VLE. These practices and procedures would allow the College to meet the Expectation.

3.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's arrangements for publication and assurance of information by exploring the availability and accuracy of information on the website, on the VLE and in the prospectus and programme handbooks. The team also held meetings with academic and support staff, senior staff and students.

3.4 Overall, the review team found the procedures for checking and producing information about higher education provision to be effective in practice. Students whom the team met confirmed their satisfaction with the accessibility and accuracy of information provided to them, both as applicants and as current students. An analysis of students' responses to the College's Admission Survey 2015-16 shows that the small proportion of students who had answered to date were happy with the information provided, and that no students rated information as poor.

3.5 The review team found programme information in the prospectus, and on the website at the time of the review visit, to be comprehensive, clear, well presented and relevant. However, in sampling the website in the weeks prior to the visit, the review team had found that, in some cases, programme handbooks or programme specifications had not at that time been published. In addition, student finance information available on the website in October 2015 had related only to 2014-15 entrants. The review team therefore

recommends that, by April 2016, the College ensures the currency of information on websites, in particular student programme and finance information.

3.6 The College has recently introduced a Higher National Staff handbook, which links to a standard programme handbook template designed to improve consistency of information provided, while allowing programme teams to customise certain aspects. These findings support the affirmation made in paragraph 1.16.

3.7 Although the College has no minimum standards policy for material on the VLE, it is in the early stages of implementing a Star Ratings scheme designed to encourage teaching staff to further engage with the VLE, and to develop and enhance the quality of information and learning material available in their programme areas. The review team found that the extent of use of the VLE by programme teams was variable. In addition, it found evidence of inconsistencies regarding the location of external examiner reports and occasional instances of out-of-date or inaccurate headings, or content on the VLE. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by September 2016, the College ensures that the VLE content is reviewed and updated in a timely and systematic manner.

3.8 Overall, however, the team concludes that the College has taken positive steps to improve its processes and operates appropriate and effective procedures to publish and maintain information about its higher education provision which is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Despite two recommendations, which relate more to minor omissions or oversights, and an affirmation, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

3.9 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low. The review team makes two new recommendations to ensure the currency of information on websites, in particular student programme and finance information, and to ensure that the VLE content is reviewed and updated in a timely and systematic manner. The team repeats one affirmation from Parts A and B with regard to the steps taken to improve consistency and rigour for Higher National programmes through the implementation of Assessment Boards, a programme handbook template, and formal processes for internal programme approval and periodic review.

3.10 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 acknowledges its responsibility for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Central to this is the emphasis on its positive relationships with students and the considerable efforts it makes to obtain students' opinions and respond to them. The College's new management structure has higher education representation at all levels and includes other senior managers such as the Director of Marketing and Student Services and the Assistant Principal for Quality as members of the Higher Education Strategy Group. The connection between deliberative and strategic committees, such as the Performance and Quality Group, with a higher education standing agenda item, and the Higher Education Strategy Group potentially enables a level of identification of common themes for enhancement and integration of the further and higher education strands of the College.

4.2 The College's new Higher Education Strategy 2015-2018, supported by the Higher Education Action Plan, states a commitment to the further development of a 'Quality Framework which ensures that continuous improvement focuses on the student experience'. It also undertakes to develop the physical learning environment at each campus so that there are appropriate spaces for higher education students to work independently and in small groups. The new Higher Education Quality Cycle structure, introduced for the academic year 2015-16, indicates the elements to be used in a detailed quality assurance and enhancement process. The College's vision within its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy is that improving the quality of learning and the student experience is at the heart of its teaching observation processes.

4.3 The College has acknowledged the need for an overarching statement to encompass its approach to enhancement in the form of an Enhancement Strategy. The first draft strategy document was approved by the Performance and Quality Group and SMT in November 2015. The College's strategies and procedures would allow this Expectation to be met.

4.4 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of the strategies and procedures by examining student feedback, the Higher Education Strategy, Enhancement Strategy, management structure and minutes of relevant committees and groups, Quality Cycle, and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The review team also met senior staff, academic staff, support staff, the Principal and students.

4.5 Overall, the review team found that the College's strategies and procedures for enhancement work effectively. Evidence from meetings with students confirmed the staff's assertions about the emphasis placed on providing a number of opportunities to listen to students' opinions and act upon them to improve the quality of the higher education experience. The review team heard of many examples of how the College had responded positively to issues raised. For example, quiet spaces at Lackham campus for higher education students to work in, improved equipment for Film Production and Cinematography, and an upgraded higher education common room at the Trowbridge campus demonstrate strategic and practical commitment to improving facilities for students through capital investments.

4.6 The College's processes of annual review and action planning and review are generally effective in bringing about improvements to facilities and aspects of teaching and learning. The Learning Resources Centre has a restructured team with some staff specifically allocated to higher education. The teaching observation scheme has been revised to provide a better higher education and peer focus and support for lecturers to develop their skills. The peer observation of tutorials has brought about changes to the tutorial process for 2015-16 and created new guidelines based on 'graduate attributes'.

4.7 The College also undertakes thematic reviews which enable good practice to be gathered. For example, after each series of teaching observations, the areas for development and good practice are collated and presented to the Performance and Quality Group and SMT. Similarly, a thematic analysis of external examiner reports is carried out by the Higher Education Manager. Good practice identified here, along with that gathered from student feedback, annual reviews and observations, is shared with staff at staff development days. Examples include questioning techniques, use of IT and use of an electronic originality checking service to communicate with the external examiner.

4.8 The newly developed management structure, involving the development of a specific post of Higher Education Manager and some discrete higher education deliberative groups, the new Higher Education Strategy 2015-2018, and a Higher Education Strategy Group, provides a workable framework for the management of provision. The new Enhancement Strategy, along with the dissemination plan developed during the review period, demonstrates the College's commitment to the continuous improvement regarding the strategic oversight of higher education provision. Although the quality assurance processes currently in use, as outlined in the Higher Education Quality Manual 2015-2016, contain a number of ways that the College gathers information about its quality of student experience and produces actions, the Higher Education Quality Cycle, as illustrated, lacks coherence and indications regarding the flow of information. While the new management structure of personnel and operational groups provides ways of gathering information and for relevant staff to deliberate the higher education agenda, there remains a lack of clarity about the reporting lines through to senior management and how strategic decisions about enhancement are made. A wide range of staff at meetings held by the review team did not articulate clearly the processes involved.

4.9 In previous years, a checklist against the Quality Code was used as the overarching higher education quality report. For 2014-15, the self-evaluation for the review was used and a similar format will be used in future. However, it is clear that deliberate steps are taken at provider level to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities and the new Enhancement Strategy is comprehensive and has the potential to be effective in addressing the shortcomings. Therefore, following the recent implementation of the new Enhancement Strategy, the review team **recommends** that, by December 2016, the College monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its Enhancement Strategy.

4.10 Overall, the College is taking deliberate steps to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities. The review team saw a number of examples of changes that have come about as a result of strategic decisions being made regarding student learning opportunities. While there remain some weaknesses, for example regarding the reporting lines to senior management, the new Enhancement Strategy and dissemination plan appear to be comprehensive and have the potential to address the shortcomings in the articulation of explicit processes and actions for enhancement at senior management level. Therefore, the review team makes a recommendation to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategy. Despite the recommendation, the review team concludes that, overall, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.11 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. The Expectation in this area is met and the level of risk is low. The team makes one new recommendation in this section which is for the College to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its Enhancement Strategy.

4.12 The review team concludes that, overall, 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 strategic aims of the College and is embedded in its ethos. Within its Higher Education Strategy 2015-2018, there are five strategic aims which include 'to continue to offer a portfolio of courses which enhances graduate employability' and 'to position Wiltshire College at the dynamic heart of the community and region, meeting learner and employer needs'. The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2015-16 also includes in its vision: 'opportunities to exploit work experience, work-related learning, realistic work environments, ILT and resource-based learning will be used to enhance vocational expertise'.

5.2 All programmes have been designed to develop employability skills, and include some form of work-related learning to support students in developing employability and industry-related skills. The new Graduate Attributes Tutorial Booklet, developed to support the tutorial process, augments skills development, including communication, problem solving, teamwork, self-management, planning and organisation, initiative and enterprise, and industry-related skills. Students are confident that their employability skills are being developed within their programmes. Staff confirmed that employability skills are developed within and outside the programme of study and provided examples of students developing communication skills by undertaking roles such as being appointed as the Higher Education Governor, student peer support, student ambassadors and student note-takers.

5.3 Employers are involved in programme development, approval and review where possible and seek to make contributions to programmes as guest lecturers. The College has recently established a Work Experience Team with the intention to work with students across all of its provision with Work Experience Coordinators supporting students and programme teams.

5.4 Good practice in relation to work-based learning is shared through the Higher Education Conference and student representatives have the opportunity to deliver key messages to enhance employability skills through the Cross-College Union Parliament meetings.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Multiple awards

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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