Initial Review of Holy Cross College, March 2013

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an Initial Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Holy Cross College. The review took place from 12 to 14 March 2013 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Emeritus Professor Sue Frost
- Dr Gillian Blunden
- Mrs Jacqueline Scott (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Holy Cross College and to make judgements as to whether or not it is maintaining the threshold academic standards set by its awarding body. In this report the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - threshold academic standards[1]
  - the quality of learning opportunities
  - the quality of information
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the institution is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the key findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] Background information about Holy Cross College is given on page 3 of this report. A dedicated page of the website explains the method for Initial Review and has links to the review guidance and other informative documents.[3]

---

[1] For an explanation of terms, see the glossary at the end of this report.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/rche/pages/initial-review.aspx

Key findings

This section summarises the QAA review team's key findings about Holy Cross College (the College).

QAA's judgements about Holy Cross College

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

- The College's policies and procedures **are likely to meet UK expectations** in maintaining the threshold academic standards set by its awarding body.
- The College's policies and procedures **are likely to meet UK expectations** in the quality of student learning opportunities.
- The College's policies and procedures are **likely to meet UK expectations** in the quality of information produced for students and applicants.

Good practice

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

- The close and effective working relationship among staff at Holy Cross College, St Mary's College and Liverpool Hope University, from senior management through to academic staff (at the University) and support tutors/higher education advisers and administrative staff (at the two colleges) (paragraph 2.45).
- The combination of the proactive identification of students who might need additional support (such as through monitoring use of the virtual learning environment) and being responsive to requests for support from individual students (paragraph 2.47).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Holy Cross College:

- that the College agree effective arrangements with Liverpool Hope University and St Mary's College to enable all staff who support learning to see the reports of external examiners and to contribute to decisions about how to respond to those reports (paragraph 1.5)
- that the College consider how it might enhance the ability of support tutors to provide support to students which draws on an understanding, and reflects the specific nature, of the subject being studied (paragraph 2.5)
- that the College strengthen the opportunities for student engagement in decision-making bodies (such as the Experience and Academic Oversight Committee, and the governing body of the College), taking into account the guidance in *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 2.21)
- that the College ensure that the information provided to current and prospective students emphasises how much private study/independent learning is involved in undertaking the programmes of study (paragraph 3.6)
- that the College agree effective arrangements with the awarding body and St Mary's College to share external examiner reports with students, taking into account the guidance provided in Indicators 14 and 15 of *Chapter B7: External examining* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 3.8).

About Holy Cross College

Holy Cross Sixth Form College and University Centre is a Catholic college in Bury which was founded in 1878. It was established as a mixed sixth form college in 1979, and began to provide higher education programmes leading to awards of Liverpool Hope University (the University) in 1999. Its mission is to 'promote a high-quality education within a community based on Gospel values', with a particular focus on offering educational opportunities to the 'poor and marginalised'. Its mission and values reflect those of Liverpool Hope University.

The College is committed to providing excellent study and pastoral support; it recognises that this is costly, especially in terms of staffing costs, given that many of its higher education students are from unconventional backgrounds and without a family background of achievement in higher education.

The QAA review was conducted specifically to look at three programmes for which the College has received direct funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) from September 2012: the BA English Literature, BA Education (Special Educational Needs) and BA Education (Early Childhood).

These programmes lead to awards of Liverpool Hope University. The College was the lead institution in a joint bid for funding to HEFCE with St Mary's College, Blackburn. There are therefore separate cohorts of students at Holy Cross College and at St Mary's College, although the BA English Literature is available only at Holy Cross College. At the time of the review, there were 54 students at Holy Cross College and 47 at St Mary's College. As the direct funding commenced from September 2012, all the students are in their first year of study. The programmes are all full-time, with teaching taking place during evenings.

Both colleges have students studying the second and third years of the same programmes, but these are indirectly funded and therefore outside the scope of this review.
However, where the College indicated its intention to apply the same arrangements to the directly funded (first-year) provision, evidence relating to this was considered by the review team and is reported on below.

The review is focused on Holy Cross College as the lead institution, but applies equally to arrangements for the students studying at St Mary's College. References to 'the College' throughout the report therefore relate to, and include, the arrangements at St Mary's College as well. Any differences in arrangements between the two colleges are identified in the report.

The two colleges, working together with Liverpool Hope University, oversee the provision collectively, using the terminology 'the Network of Hope'. They have been working in partnership for the delivery of higher education, albeit indirectly funded, since 1999.

All teaching on the three programmes is provided by Liverpool Hope University. Academic staff travel to Bury and Blackburn to the deliver the teaching on one or two evenings per week.

Explanation of the findings about Holy Cross College

This section explains the key findings of the review in more detail.[4]

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[5] is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the Review of College Higher Education handbook, also on the QAA website.[6]

1   Academic standards

Outcome

The policies and procedures at Holy Cross College are **likely to meet UK expectations** in maintaining the threshold academic standards set by its awarding body. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1   All three programmes within the scope of the review have been allocated to the appropriate level of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Responsibility for this rests with Liverpool Hope University as the awarding and teaching body, as part of the programme design and approval process. Evidence is provided through the Definitive Programme Documents.

1.2   The Definitive Programme Documents and student handbooks also indicate that the programmes include sufficient volume of study, including through blended learning, to enable students to achieve the programme learning outcomes.

Use of external examiners

1.3   The appointment and induction of external examiners, and the consideration of their reports, is the responsibility of Liverpool Hope University as the degree-awarding body. According to the terms of reference, the Experience and Academic Oversight Committee (EAOC) will be responsible for ensuring that issues raised by external examiners in relation to the provision are acted upon. Staff from both Holy Cross College and St Mary's College are members of this committee. The EAOC will report to Liverpool Hope University's Teaching and Learning Group.

1.4   At the time of the review, external examiner appointments were, according to the minutes of the EAOC, in the process of being confirmed for the three programmes within the scope of the review.

1.5   Staff at both colleges have in previous years (relating to provision outside the scope of the review) been provided with summaries of external examiners reports rather than the reports themselves. The first reports for the programmes within the scope of the review will be due at the end of the current academic year. The review team **recommends** that the College agree effective arrangements with Liverpool Hope University and St Mary's College

---

[4] The full body of evidence used to compile the report is not published. However, it is available on request for inspection; please contact QAA Reviews Group.
[5] www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx
[6] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/rche-handbook.aspx

to enable all staff who support learning to see the reports of external examiners and to contribute to decisions about how to respond to those reports.

Assessment and standards

1.6   The design, approval, moderation and marking of assessment, and the provision of feedback to students, is the responsibility of Liverpool Hope University, applying its assessment regulations. College staff attend meetings of the University's assessment subcommittees. Through these meetings, they ensure the accuracy of the information presented to the relevant Assessment Boards and they provide evidence, within the University's regulations, of any mitigating circumstances. College staff are permitted, within the University's regulations and in liaison with relevant University academic staff, to grant students extensions to submission dates.

1.7   The timing and nature of assessments is communicated effectively to students through the written information given by the University, for example in the student handbooks.

1.8   Assessment activities, including assignments and examinations, are conducted under rigorous conditions within the College by College administrative staff, to ensure the integrity of the assessment process.

1.9   Where students are required to submit work for assessment to the College in hard copy, a receipt is issued on submission. Where they are required to submit an electronic version, use of plagiarism detection software is recommended. The work is uploaded by the student via the the University's virtual learning environment.

1.10   University staff provide feedback to students on assessed work within the regulation turnaround period of four working weeks. College support tutors can provide additional support to students to help students make full use of the feedback to assist their learning.

Setting and maintaining programme standards

1.11   The design, approval, monitoring and review of the programmes is the responsibility of the University. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that College staff contribute to these processes through involvement at annual planning days, programme approval events, faculty meetings and through the EAOC.

Subject benchmarks

1.12   The University is responsible for ensuring that the programmes reflect the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Reference to the relevant Statements is made in the Definitive Programme Documents.

2   Quality of learning opportunities

Outcome

The policies and procedures at Holy Cross College are **likely to meet UK expectations** in the quality of student learning opportunities. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Professional standards for teaching and learning

2.1   The University is responsible for teaching and for ensuring that its teaching staff are developed and supported appropriately. College support tutors (and 'higher education advisers' at St Mary's College) provide additional advice and guidance to students, including advice relating to financial matters and referral to specialist advisers. Senior support tutors also provide general academic skills support. Students who met the review team confirmed the value of the advice they receive.

2.2   College staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities as set out in their role descriptions. There is a systematic approach to the support and development of the staff that ensures they are able to meet the requirements of their formal agreement with the University. These arrangements meet the general principles of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

2.3   All support tutors and administrative staff are appropriately qualified, evidenced through their curricula vitae and through programmes for staff development. Those appointed without the appropriate qualifications are enabled to continue their studies while in-post.

2.4   Peer observation is in place for new support tutors, to ensure that they can perform to the required standard. Examples were provided for a recently appointed support tutor, both in relation to being peer observed and to completing the College's induction programme.

2.5   While support tutors are skilled and qualified to offer general support and advice, this is not informed by an understanding of the subject that each student is studying. Students indicated that they would value more opportunities to receive advice that is subject-informed. The review team was of the view that there could be value to staff and students in support tutors developing a greater understanding of the programmes that the students are studying, without seeking to encroach on the academic role of University staff. The review team **recommends** that the College consider how it might enhance the ability of support tutors to provide support to students which draws on an understanding, and reflects the specific nature, of the subject being studied.

Learning resources

2.6   The review team sought evidence of whether the learning resources were meeting the expectation of being appropriate to allow students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes. In this case, the resources available to the students are effective in supporting their learning, as demonstrated in the documentation provided by the College and the views of students, both those who met the review team and in the student submission.

2.7   The responsibilities of the University and the College are set out in the written agreement. The University provides the teaching resources and the teaching materials that are specialist requirements for the three programmes, including online materials. Delivery of the face-to-face elements of the programmes takes place at the College.

2.8   Students also have access at the College to a library and IT facilities, supported by specialist library and IT staff who are available during the evenings when students are in college. These staff possess appropriate qualifications and engage in development opportunities. The College provides students with on-site IT and library induction.

2.9   The College has a strategic approach to the continuous improvement of its facilities for higher education students, evidenced in the estates action plan.

2.10   The College intends to involve the directly funded students in its existing annual higher education satisfaction survey to ensure that feedback is obtained and considered.

2.11   Senior College staff recognise, and consider they are equipped to address, the challenge that providing resources for the directly funded programmes poses as student numbers grow. Effective communication between staff supports the College in meeting this challenge. For example, the librarians from both colleges meet regularly with the University librarian, and draw on the expertise provided by one librarian through his membership of the North West Academic Research Libraries Group and the National Committee. Communication between the librarians extends to liaising with the academic staff delivering the programmes to ensure that students have access to the appropriate resources.

2.12   Students have full access - supported by appropriate induction - to the library at Liverpool Hope University, including full online access. Weekly transfers of books take place to meet individual book requests.

Student voice

2.13   Responsibilities for engaging students in quality assurance and enhancement are shared between the University and the College, reflecting the commitments in the written agreement. The University is responsible for obtaining student feedback on the programmes, for example through module evaluation questionnaires.

2.14   The College has extensive experience of operating student representative arrangements for higher education students. For the directly funded provision, students are represented through a staff-student liaison committee. Securing student representatives from a cohort of students who mostly work full-time and/or have extensive family commitments is a challenge; minutes of meetings and discussion with students indicated strengths and weaknesses in the process. Meetings are timed to coincide as far as possible with student availability. Evidence provided to the review team indicated that student representatives had a positive experience, whereas some students were not clear who their representatives were and had little experience of feedback with the wider student body. The College has advertised for representatives through posters and by providing induction information.

2.15   Students indicated that more could be done to provide training for representatives to help prepare students for the role, including in communicating with the rest of the cohort.

2.16   The College undertakes periodic surveys to gather feedback on matters such as the induction programme and the provision of student support and learning resources. Feedback is considered at team meetings at the College, as well as more formally at senior management meetings with the University. St Mary's College has also implemented mechanisms such as 'you said, we did' information to feed back to students how their views have been acted on.

2.17   Student feedback is also considered at College staff planning days as a discrete item of business, with concerns discussed and appropriate actions identified. Evidence from staff and students indicated that much of the interaction and feedback took place directly between individual staff and students, with the formal committees addressing headline issues.

2.18 Staff and students provided the review team with examples of issues raised by students that had resulted in change, for example changes to assessment weighting, changes to the length of the teaching session involving an individual tutor, and changes to timetables.

2.19 The College does not provide opportunities for student representation at any of its formal committees (other than the staff-student liaison committee), nor for the EAOC (chaired by the University, and also involving St Mary's College staff). The minutes of the EAOC indicate that it had recently discussed the issue of student membership and decided that this was inappropriate both in terms of the type of issues which might be considered and the likely ability of students to be able to attend meetings, as these are held at the University. The review team explored with senior staff of the College the nature of this decision, given the significance of the role of the Committee in overseeing the directly funded provision - in particular in picking up issues raised by the staff-student liaison committee, and in the light of the recently published *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code.

2.20 At St Mary's College, students on the directly funded provision are represented through a student governor on the St Mary's College Board of Governors, elected from among the higher education students. Discussion between the review team and senior staff highlighted the difference in practice between the two colleges as to the appointment of a higher education student as a college governor.

2.21 The review team **recommends** that the College strengthen the opportunities for student engagement in decision-making bodies (such as the EAOC, and the governing body of Holy Cross College), taking into account the guidance in *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code.

Management information

2.22 The written agreement between the University and the College makes explicit that the University is responsible for the effective use of management information to safeguard quality and standards and promote the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

2.23 The College also produces and makes effective use of appropriate management information, for example relating to student retention, withdrawals, interruptions of study, complaints and the destination of leavers. Such data are considered by the senior management team and also discussed with the University through the EAOC.

2.24 Data are also collated and analysed relating to leavers, who are contacted by the College in March each year to ascertain their initial career destinations.

Admission to the College

2.25 Admissions criteria, which are set out in the written agreement, are clear, fair, explicit and applied consistently. The College is responsible for making decisions about which students to admit. The University is responsible for determining applications for the accreditation of prior learning. The College works closely with the University to ensure fairness of the admissions procedures.

2.26 Comprehensive information, including an information pack, is given to potential applicants to support their decision-making. Each applicant attends a one-to-one advice session. Additional information relating to entry requirements and to each programme are provided on the College website. Students who met the review team confirmed that they

found the pre-course information helpful - views which reflected the responses in the student submission.

2.27   Applications are supported by tests designed to ensure the suitability of applicants for the programmes. For the two BA Education programmes, applicants complete a timed test, conducted by College staff. For applicants to the BA English Literature, applicants complete an essay at home which is then marked by University academic staff, as its focus is knowledge of the subject.

2.28   Students are further supported through the College's induction programme, which takes place prior to the start of the programme.

2.29   The College has effective arrangements in place to review its admissions practices and the support provided to students. These arrangements include weekly staff and support tutor meetings in alternate weeks, frequent meetings with University admissions staff and between staff of the two colleges. The College intends to extend to higher education students its existing annual evaluation of admissions arrangements - currently used for sixth form students - to ensure that student feedback is gathered from the higher education students. According to staff, admissions issues could be discussed at staff-student liaison committee meetings if requested by students. The review team did not see any evidence that this had so far occurred.

2.30   Preparations are being made so that from September 2014 students on the directly funded provision can be admitted through UCAS in place of the existing paper-based arrangements. Staff at St Mary's College already have experience of operating UCAS procedures for entry to programmes outside the scope of this review. At Holy Cross College, relevant staff are booked to attend UCAS training in May 2013.

2.31   A clear process is in place to ensure that where an applicant discloses any special needs during admission, appropriate arrangements can be made. The process includes referral to the University's Student Development and Welfare Team. Students who met the review team confirmed that these arrangements are effective in enabling appropriate support needs to be identified.

Complaints and appeals

2.32   Effective arrangements are in place to enable students to make complaints and/or appeals, with accurate information being provided to them about these processes, primarily through the student handbooks. The written agreement between the College and the University makes clear that the latter is responsible for both complaints and appeals relating to the award and the provision of teaching. Support tutors are clear about the University's policies and where to find them, and can direct students to them where appropriate. Feedback is provided to complainants and to College staff by the University.

2.33   For services provided by the College, an internal complaints policy applies, and students who met the review team indicated that they would raise matters through the support tutors in the first instance. This enables a number of matters to be resolved informally. Senior management maintain an overview of issues raised through the complaints process.

Career advice and guidance

2.34   The written agreement between the College and the University provides for careers advice and guidance to be provided by trained staff at the University. This will be delivered

through a combination of tutorials, briefing events and one-to-one sessions. College staff are equipped to provide more general support. The students on the directly funded provision, being in their first year, have not so far needed to engage with careers advice, and those who met the review team indicated that they had received the career mapping document provided by the University but had not yet made significant use of it; they were aware that it was designed to be used throughout their three years on the programme.

Supporting disabled students

2.35   As indicated above, where support needs are identified during admission, College staff consult with the University to agree an individual support plan. The College is responsible for adaptations to the physical environment, and support tutors provide ongoing support and advice. The University is responsible for making reasonable adaptations of the teaching aspects of the programme; this is reflected in University regulations.

2.36   Referral is made to specialist agencies when required, and systems are in place to access assessment for educational psychology. There may be a contribution expected of students towards the cost of assessments.

2.37   Students who met the review team confirmed that the assessment of needs is timely and support is ongoing. Examples were given of help provided, such as the provision of a dictaphone and special parking arrangements.

Supporting international students

2.38   The College does not recruit, and does not currently intended to recruit, international students.

Learning delivered through collaborative arrangements

2.39   The quality of learning opportunities delivered through the partnership with the University is managed effectively and is likely to enable students to complete their awards. The provision of directly funded programmes from 2012-13 has created a new and very different style of partnership between the College and the University. The College commissions the University to deliver the programmes at its Bury site and also at St Mary's College in Blackburn, providing access to higher education for students who might otherwise not access it. The College therefore has a responsibility to hold the University to account for how it delivers the provision. As the lead college for funding purposes, Holy Cross College works with St Mary's College to ensure that students taught at the St Mary's site in Blackburn receive a comparable learning experience.

2.40   The College is therefore also accountable to the University for providing learning resources, especially the rooms within the College where teaching is delivered by University staff. This new and emergent relationship, based on mutual accountability, is recognised as qualitatively different from the more conventional approaches that have been maintained across the Network of Hope previously. The Principals of the colleges indicated to the review team that they are beginning to recognise the new opportunities and challenges that this new relationship entails, although it was not evident to the review team that the extent of the obligation that is placed on the College as commissioners of education is fully realised. The College has a responsibility to understand and oversee all of the quality assurance processes pertaining to the directly funded students. The processes by which this will be orchestrated remain emergent at this stage, but in discussion with the review team, senior staff were clear of their new responsibilities in this collaborative venture.

2.41   A detailed formal written agreement is in place, signed by the University and both colleges, which ensures clarity of the relationships and responsibilities in relation to the management of standards and quality in the programmes delivered. Senior College staff confirmed during the review that agreement had just been reached with the University to extend into 2013-14 the additional support provided by the University, detailed in a schedule to the written agreement.

2.42   Staff at both colleges and the University have worked to build on the existing effective relationships. Meetings with staff confirmed the statements in the self-evaluation document that there are effective channels of communication, with liaison taking place at different levels of the organisations, both formally and informally. In addition to the Network of Hope meetings and meetings of the EAOC, both Principals are members of the University Senate, and both meet frequently with the University's Vice-Chancellor. Support tutors and administrative staff meet frequently with their counterparts at St Mary's College, as well as with academic staff at the University.

2.43   It is evident to the review team that the relationship between the University and the two colleges is mutually trusting and respectful at all levels of the organisations, and is effective in enabling issues to be addressed through joint working. It provides a practical demonstration of the shared values and ethos which underpin the Network of Hope.

2.44   Students who met the review team were clear that their programme was leading to an award of Liverpool Hope University and that University staff delivered the teaching. They valued the induction visit to the University, which had been provided for them early on in the programme, and were aware that a further visit would take place towards the end of the first year.

2.45   The close and effective working relationship among staff at Holy Cross College, St Mary's College and Liverpool Hope University, from senior management through to academic staff (at the University) and support tutors/higher education advisors and administrative staff (at the two colleges) is a **feature of good practice**.

Flexible, distributed and e-learning

2.46   The written agreement makes clear that the University is responsible for the management and delivery of learning opportunities, provided through a blend of face-to-face teaching (delivered by University staff who travel to each of the college sites) and online materials devised by University staff. IT support is provided by trained staff at the College to ensure that students can access the materials, and support tutors play a key role in supporting students in the use of the virtual learning environment.

2.47   The College checks the University virtual learning environment to make support tutors aware of students who have not accessed course material during the previous week. This enables support tutors to liaise with students to identify any issues and individual support which may be required. In the view of the review team, this approach exemplified the way in which the College supports its prospective and current students. The combination of the proactive identification of students who might need additional support (such as through monitoring use of the virtual learning environment) and being responsive to requests for support from individual students is a **feature of good practice**.

Work-based and placement learning

2.48   The three programmes within the scope of the review do not feature work-based or placement learning.

Student charter

2.49   Both Holy Cross College and St Mary's College student handbooks include a student charter applicable to their higher education students. These clearly identify what is expected of students and what they can expect of the college they are attending. Students who met the review team confirmed that they are aware of the information contained in the relevant handbook.

2.50   Consideration has yet to be given to how any periodic review of student charters will involve students.

2.51   The University also has its own student charter, which is clearly referred to in College student handbooks and is accessible through the University website. Support tutors are also familiar with the University student charter and can advise students where appropriate.

3   Quality of information for students and applicants

Outcome

The policies and procedures at Holy Cross College are **likely to meet UK expectations** in the quality of information produced for students and applicants. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Findings

3.1   Both colleges have their own marketing coordinators and clear lines of responsibility for approving publicity material and changes to website content. Publicity material is also approved by the University, and regulations are adhered to for the use of the University logo.

3.2   The College is currently contributing data for the University's Key Information Set (KIS), in accordance with the written agreement. Senior staff confirmed that the University will continue the support it is providing to the College for another year (2013-14) to enable KIS data to be further developed by the College in due course.

3.3   The College website provides information on the higher education provision, and is complemented by a University Centre student handbook, induction handbook and course-based handbooks which are produced by subject staff at the University.

3.4   The University is responsible for the programme specifications, which are available to students through the course-based handbooks and University website.

3.5   Students who met the review team indicated that they were unclear about the number of hours of study required for a full-time programme, and considered that this had not been made clear to them either prior to, or on entry to, their programme. In particular, there was limited understanding that a full-time programme entails a notional 40 hours of learning time, including teaching, online learning, private study and assessment. Handbooks provided to the review team indicated that study requirements were not explicit. The College confirmed that reliance is placed on advising students of the level of commitment required at the one-to-one (pre-admission) advice sessions, rather than through published information for prospective or current students.

3.6   The review team **recommends** that the College ensure that the information provided to current and prospective students emphasises how much private study/independent learning is involved in undertaking the programmes of study.

3.7   Apart from the issue of the learning commitment, students who met the review team considered that the information and advice they were provided with prior to, and on entry to, the programmes was clear and helpful, especially with reference to financial matters including tuition fees and students' eligibility for financial support. The information pack provided to the review team reinforced this impression. In particular, students valued the provision of reading lists in advance of courses starting.

3.8   External examiners' reports have not been shared with higher education students on the indirectly funded provision, and arrangements are not in place for the reports which will be received later this year for the directly funded provision to be shared. Senior staff indicated that sharing reports, including through the staff-student liaison committee, could be implemented. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College agree effective arrangements with the awarding body and St Marys' College to share external examiner reports with students, taking into account the guidance provided in Indicators 14 and 15 of *Chapter B7: External examining* of the Quality Code.

Glossary

Initial Review is very similar to Review of College Higher Education (RCHE). The guidance note for Initial Review is intended to be read in conjunction with the RCHE handbook. The RCHE handbook gives formal definitions of terms such as 'threshold standards' and 'learning opportunities' (pages 17-20). This glossary provides a quick reference to the terms.

The guidance for Initial Review can be found on the QAA website at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/initial-review-guidance.aspx

The RCHE handbook can be found on the QAA website at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/rche-handbook.aspx .

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

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx.

academic standards: The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

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.

enhancement: Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice: A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution or college manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

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*.

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

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

operational definition: A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reports.

programme (of study): An approved course of study which 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.

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.

threshold academic standard: The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications **frameworks**. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

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